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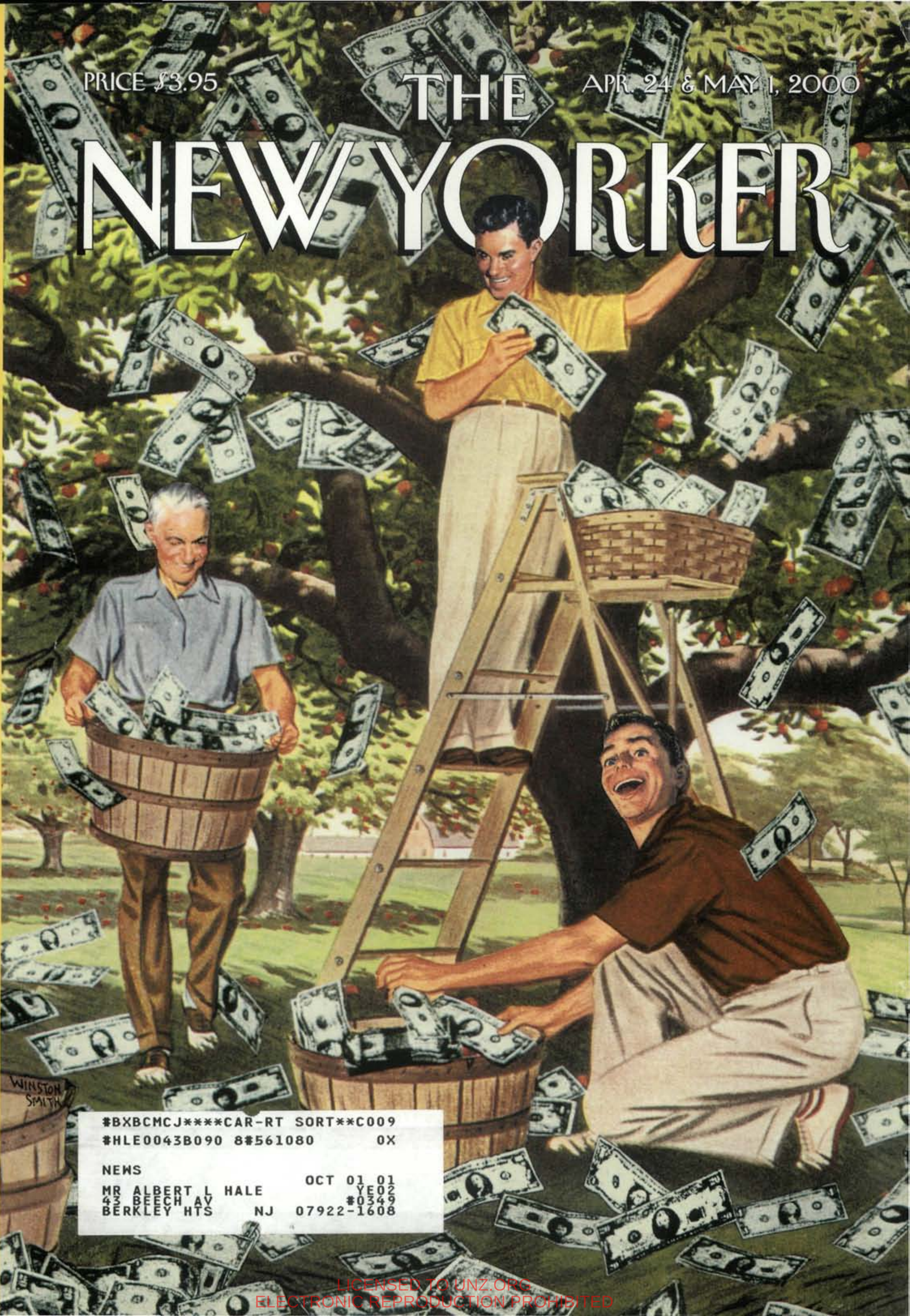
APR. 24 & MAY 1, 2000



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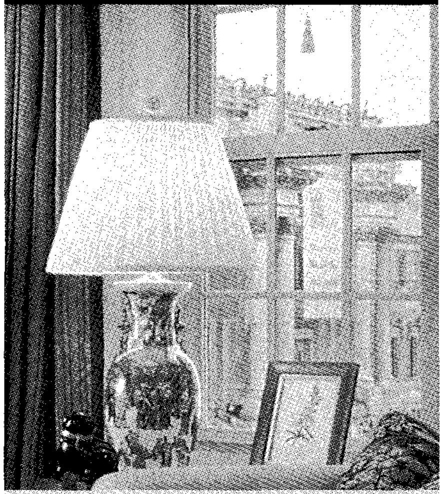

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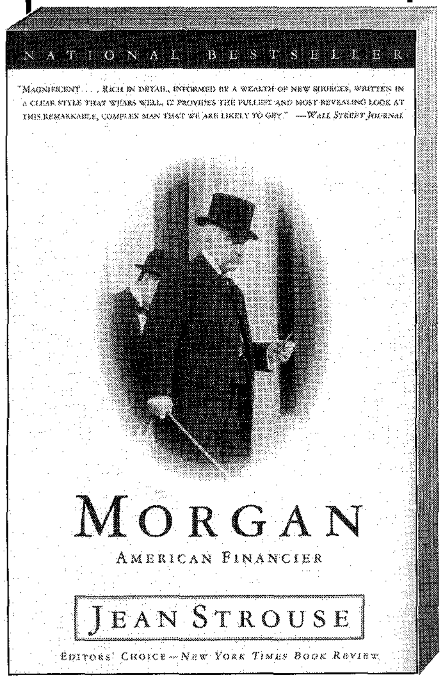
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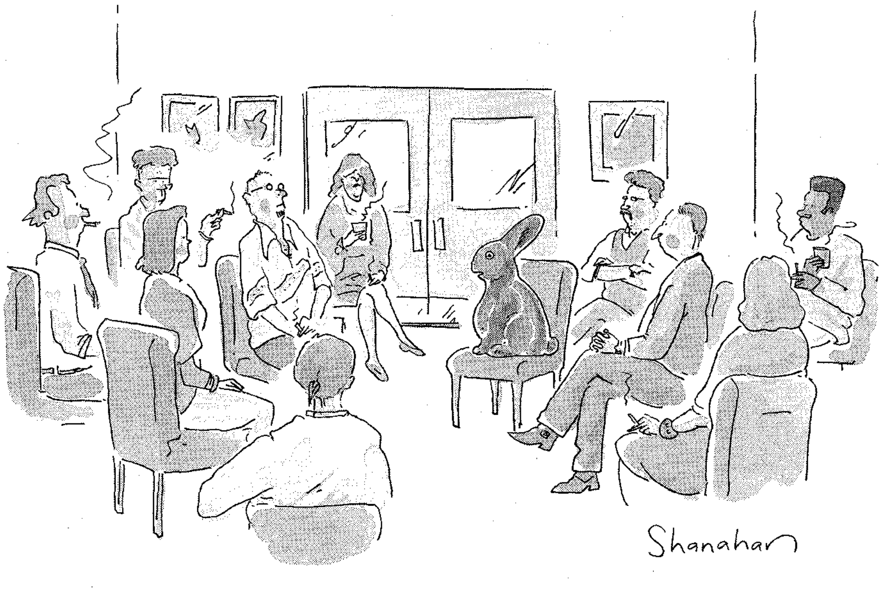

"My name is Bunny, and I'm a chocoholic."

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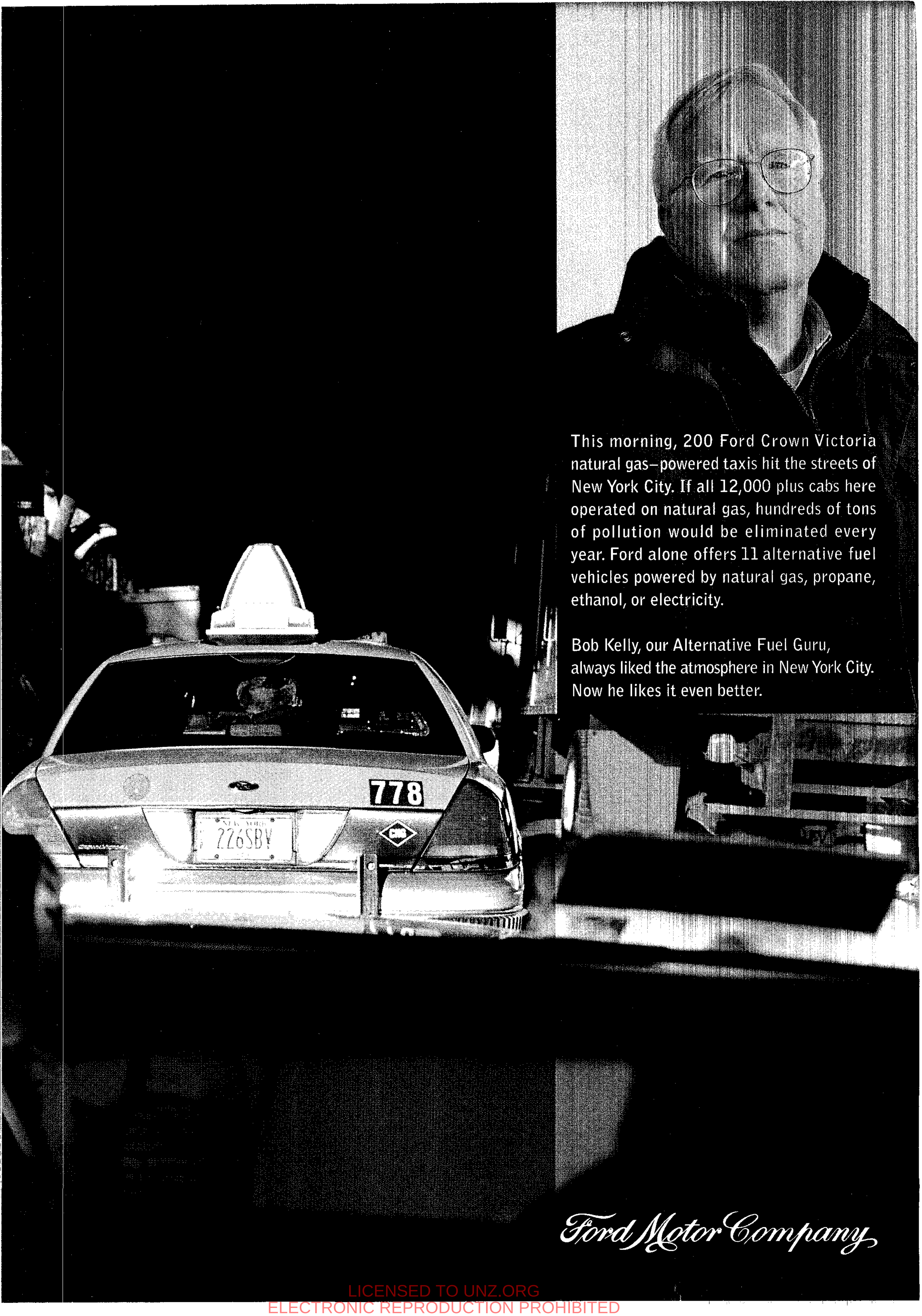

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GENERATION B-PLUS

No one will argue against the fact that grades are higher at most universities than they used to be, as Nicholas Lemann writes in his April 3rd Comment. Lemann's basic argument is that this is because students at Ivy League universities now care about their grades and because professors no longer want to spend time grading. But isn't it also possible that the quality of the students has improved over the years? If a hundred people were accepted to Princeton (where I am currently a senior) fifty years ago, they were perhaps a hundred of the best white men in high school. Out of a hundred people accepted today, almost half are women, and a significant percentage are non-white. Surely the students accepted from this much larger, and so more competitive, applicant pool are capable of posting grades legitimately better than those received by students chosen from a smaller group. I have just as much right to my A as someone who "earned" one fifty years ago has to his.
Misha Rosenbach
Princeton, N.J.

Mr. Lemann would have us believe that the "gentleman's C" of yesteryear has magically turned into a B-plus today, thanks to the craven indifference of Ivy League professors who succumb to student pressure so they can get back to their research. Yet, as Lemann's own article says, the real change is that today's young gentlefolk are working for their grades: they'll do a lot—including actually studying—to get the marks they now feel they need to get into professional school. At Columbia, though I take a sadistic pleasure in giving out C's, I rarely have the opportunity to do so.
David Damrosch
Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University
New York City

DOT-CARNEGIE?

In Larissa MacFarquhar's "Caesar.com" (April 3rd), we are presented with Michael Saylor, yet another dot-com billionaire bereft of the ability to think a balanced or sophisticated thought. He fills the air instead with nervous tics and plans for how the government could come to have knowledge and control over its citizens' movements; he dreams of a "decision support" earpiece that would end all independent thought and would hand people's decision-making power over to a computer whose purpose is to instill the abject fear of its own absence. "The beauty is," he says, "with proper marketing, we can make you afraid." In other words, it turns out that the only thing we have to fear is the corporate manufacture of fear itself. Save it, Mike.
Thomas Wilson
Encino, Calif.

THE STAYING POWER OF POP

Nick Hornby's review of Steely Dan (Popular Music, March 27th) is easily dismissed if you don't agree, which I don't. What isn't so easily dismissable are Hornby's strange opinions on and cavalier treatment of the importance of popular music. He writes that "the best of it belongs to a precise cultural moment; and when that cultural moment has gone the artist should do the decent thing and go, too." Since he applies this theory to Randy Newman, Tom Waits, and Bob Dylan, surely Gershwin, Porter, Bacharach, Ellington, Sinatra, Lee, Holiday, etc. are even less culturally relevant and should also have gone away after interpreting their brief moments. No matter how many times it's been said, it bears repeating that there are only two kinds of music, good and bad. Music, like any creative art, is almost always about the gamut of human emotions, which are relevant in any cultural moment.
Bob Telaak
Cleveland, Ohio

•

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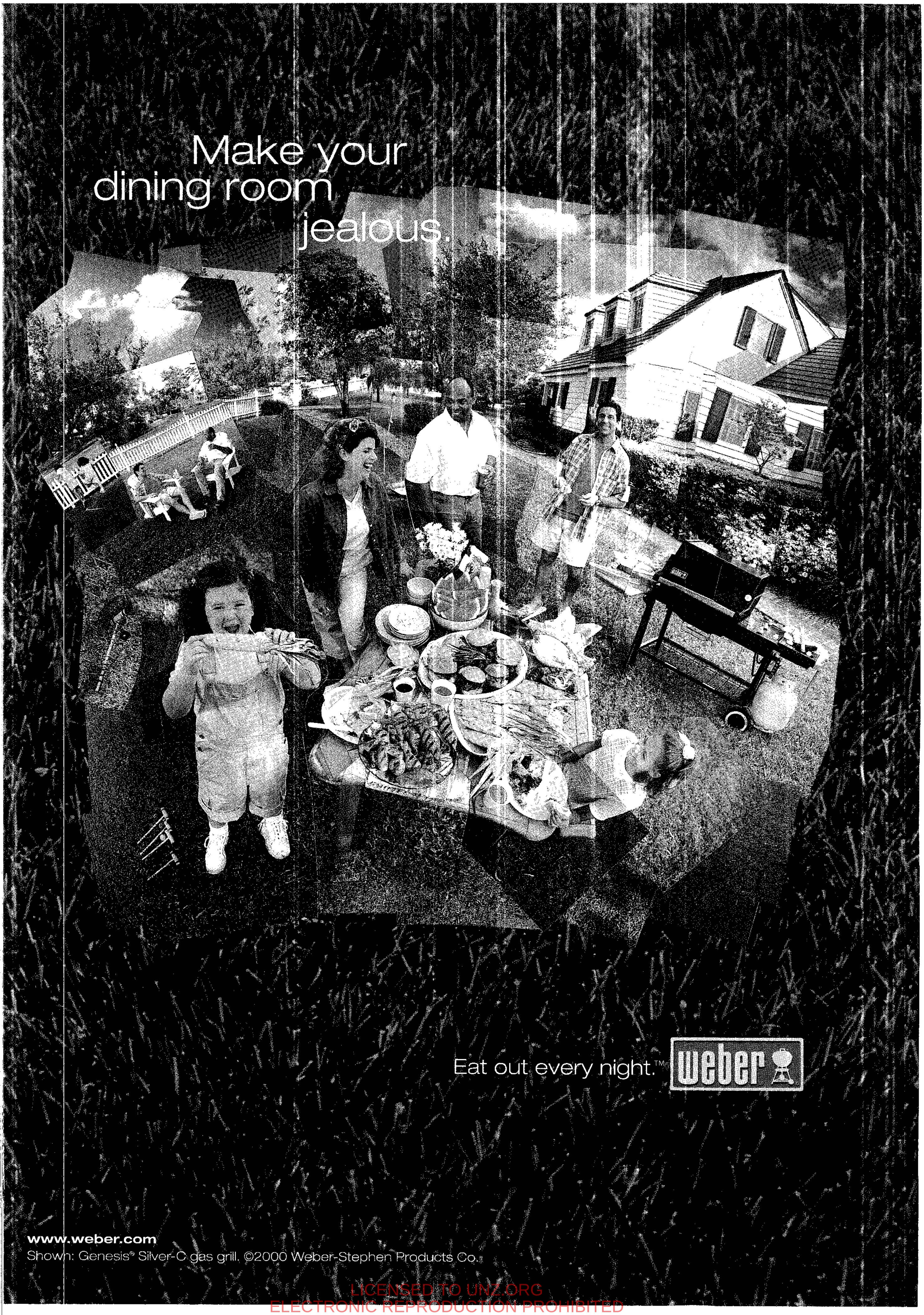
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

DIRTY BLONDE
Claudia Shear and James Lapine's cunningly written, raffish play, which was staged earlier this year at New York Theatre Workshop, has moved to Broadway. In previews through April 30. Opens May 1 at 7. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

HOLLY HUGHES
The performance artist presents her latest solo work, "Preaching to the Perverted." Preview on April 27. Opens April 30 at 7:30 and continues, Sundays only, through May 21. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

HOTEL UNIVERSE
The Blue Light Theatre Company wraps up the season with Philip Barry's 1930 play, about a group of American expatriates vacationing on the French Riviera after the Second World War. In previews through April 26. Opens April 27 at 7. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200.)

JITNEY
August Wilson's first play, set in 1977, about the lives of a group of Pittsburgh gypsy-cab drivers. In previews through April 24. Opens April 25 at 6:30. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

THE MUSIC MAN
Craig Bierko is Professor Harold Hill, and Rebecca Luker is Marian the Librarian, in a revival of Meredith Willson's 1957 musical. Susan Stroman is the director. In previews through April 26. Opens April 27 at 6:30. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

OUR LADY OF SLIGO
Sinéad Cusack has the leading role in Sebastian Barry's latest drama, under the direction of Max Stafford-Clark. Preview on April 19. Opens April 20 at 7. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

TALLER THAN A DWARF
From the pen of Elaine May, a new comedy starring Matthew Broderick and Parker Posey and directed by Alan Arkin. In previews through April 23. Opens April 24 at 6:45. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

UNCLE VANYA
Derek Jakobi, Laura Linney, Brian Murray, and Roger Rees take on Chekhov's play, under the direction of Michael Mayer. In previews through April 29. Opens April 30 at 7. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

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WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE
Eric Bogosian's latest solo show, directed by Jo Bonney. Previews begin April 24. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

THE WILD DUCK
The Century Center's Ibsen series continues with the playwright's 1884 drama. Previews begin April 28. (111 E. 15th St. 982-6782.)

YARD GAL
From London's Royal Court Theatre, Rebecca Prichard's drama about two juvenile delinquents on the run in London. In previews through April 25. Opens April 26 at 8:30. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AIDA
Disney's new musical—five years in the making and a product of Pharaonic expense—is, if not perfect, a lively, polished entertainment with bursts of joyful flamboyance worthy of its composer, Elton John. (Tim Rice's lyrics are mostly plodding and clunky, but they don't detract too much from the proceedings.) The two female leads—Heather Headley, as Aida, and Sherie René Scott, as Amneris—shine in their different ways, and Bob Crowley's brilliant sets give the show both visual dazzle and emotional resonance. Also with Adam Pascal, as Radames, who, looking like a Harlequin-romance cover model and sounding a little like Michael Bolton, doesn't quite pack the punch that his two co-stars do. Directed by Robert Falls. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/10/00.) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.)

AMADEUS
From London, a revival of Peter Shaffer's drama, starring Michael Sheen as Mozart and David Suchet as Salieri. Sir Peter Hall is the director. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

AMERICAN BUFFALO
In the Atlantic Theatre Company's lucid but uninspired staging of David Mamet's great 1975 play, the actors' chemistry never quite fills out the humiliated hearts of their characters—a junk-shop owner named Don (Philip Baker Hall), his young junkie gofer (the poignant, baby-faced Mark Webber), and Teach (the expert William H. Macy), a petty criminal who kisses himself in on a scam to steal back a nickel for which some dealer has paid Don ninety dollars. Still, Mamet's pitch-perfect dialogue, the depth of his characterization and his sense of the corroded social fabric, the wild humor and the sadness in the threadbare world he so completely imagines, are some kind of theatrical miracle. (3/27/00) (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

ARMS AND THE MAN
A Roundabout Theatre production of Shaw's 1894 play. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900. Closes April 30.)

BAD BOY NIETZSCHE
Richard Foreman's examination of intellectual accountability and a philosopher's slide into madness. It's a smart play with a big payoff and, like all of Foreman's work, is the sort of thing that sticks in the brain in the best possible way. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

BLOOD ON THE DINING ROOM FLOOR
The WPA Theatre presents a musical based on Gertrude Stein's murder mystery, by Jonathan Sheffer. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes May 7.)

THE BOMB-ITTY OF ERRORS
In this exuberant take on "The Comedy of Errors," the action has been shifted to a hip-hop realm, and the basic ideas remain the same, but the four extravagantly talented writer-actors (who play all of the parts) make it seem altogether new. (45 Bleecker, 45 Bleecker St., at Lafayette St. 307-4100.)

COBB
In Lee Blessing's bio-drama, three actors portray the Baseball Hall of Famer Ty Cobb at different stages in his life. (Melting Pot Theatre, 311 W. 43rd St. 279-4200.)

CONTACT
The director and choreographer Susan Stroman's dance play, a triptych of simple stories about the various forms of human connection and the atmosphere of longing, is a big-hearted, witty crowd-pleaser. (10/18-25/99) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

COPENHAGEN
Michael Frayn's drama, which was inspired by a meeting in 1941 between the German physicist Werner Heisenberg and his Danish counterpart Niels Bohr. Michael Blakemore is the director. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) (Reviewed in this issue.)

DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Donald Margulies's new play is a perceptive depiction of the mystery and the mundanity of marriage, and the cast give well-rounded performances. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.)

THE DIRECTOR
The playwright Nancy Hasty asks whether acting (which is essentially lying) can reveal deeper truth. It's a smart play, and, though it's not entirely satisfying intellectually, John Shea's brilliant performance as the director almost makes it seem so. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 279-4200.)

THE GREEN BIRD
The director Julie Taymor brings Carlo Gozzi's fairy tale to the stage with puppets, masks, and live performers. The music is by Elliot Goldenthal. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

JACKIE MASON: MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING
The comic is back on Broadway. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR
Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1971 musical, based on the last days in the life of you know who. Gale Edwards is the director. (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

KISS ME, KATE
With all its admirable expertise and its various delights, this production of the Cole Porter musical is oddly earthbound: it comes down to the vexing issue of chemistry. The leads, Marin Mazzie and Brian Stokes Mitchell, are expert players, but they are not—in the true meaning of the words—star performers. (11/29/99) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

LADY BUNNY
Performing her new solo spectacle, "A Taste of Bunny." Continues, Sundays at 10, through May 28. (Fez, 380 Lafayette St. 462-9077.)

MISS LULU BETT
Zona Gale's 1920 play about a spinster's emancipation. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-2031. Closes April 23.)

A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN
A solid and satisfying revival of Eugene O'Neill's 1943 drama about the unrequited love between a conniving farmer's faithful and unfulfilled daughter and the broken-down mess of a man she loves. Gabriel Byrne's performance as James Tyrone, an alcoholic actor who returns from New York to unburden himself in the arms of the earth mother Josie, is something to see: though his character is half-dead from drink, Byrne's vivid portrait conjures all the dimensions of the tortured emotion that got him there. Cherry Jones, however, usually an actress of subtlety, delivers such a mannered portrayal of Josie that she seems like Teflon; Byrne's performance practically slides right off her. But all in all it's fine Broadway theatre and not to be missed. Daniel Sullivan directed. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

MOVING BODIES
Arthur Giron's new play follows the life of the Manhattan Project physicist Richard Feynman. (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982. Closes April 29.)

NAKED
A thoughtful, if not particularly thrilling, production of Luigi Pirandello's 1922 play, which tracks the tale of a governess in the aftermath of sensational events in her life: a child has died in her care, her fiancé has jilted her, she has attempted suicide, and, finally, she has become tabloid fodder. Pirandello picks up the thread when a famed novelist befriends her, hoping to turn her story into a book. He's not the only person with an investment in her story, though, and a struggle for control of the truth ensues. Mira Sorvino plays the blank slate of a governess, Daniel Benzali the self-absorbed novelist. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes April 30.)

NOEL COWARD'S SUITE IN 2 KEYS
Two of Noël Coward's last plays ("Shadows of the Evening" and "A Song at Twilight")—miniature meditations on love, death, and secrecy which flash with wit and style. Though the plays don't have the technical perfection of some of Coward's earlier works, they are considerably more personal, and it is fascinating to see his tremendous powers of social observation focussed on the concerns of his own life. And he is brilliantly served by the cast of Judith Ivey, Hayley Mills (in her American theatre début, believe it or not), and, particularly, Paxton Whitehead. Directed with a sure, light touch by John Tillinger, with a beautiful set by James Noone. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

PEARL THEATRE COMPANY
Presenting Congreve's "The Way of the World," in repertory with the Oresteia. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

THE REAL THING
From London, a Donmar Warehouse staging of Tom Stoppard's 1984 play, directed by David Leveaux. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

THE RIDE DOWN MT. MORGAN
Patrick Stewart portrays a bigamist in Arthur Miller's play. David Esbjornson is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

RIVERDANCE
The Irish troupe of dancers, singers, and musicians comes to Broadway. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

ROSE
Olympia Dukakis has the title role in a new play by Martin Sherman, which traces a Jewish woman's life, from her childhood in Russia to the Warsaw ghettos to Miami Beach. Nancy Meckler is the director. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

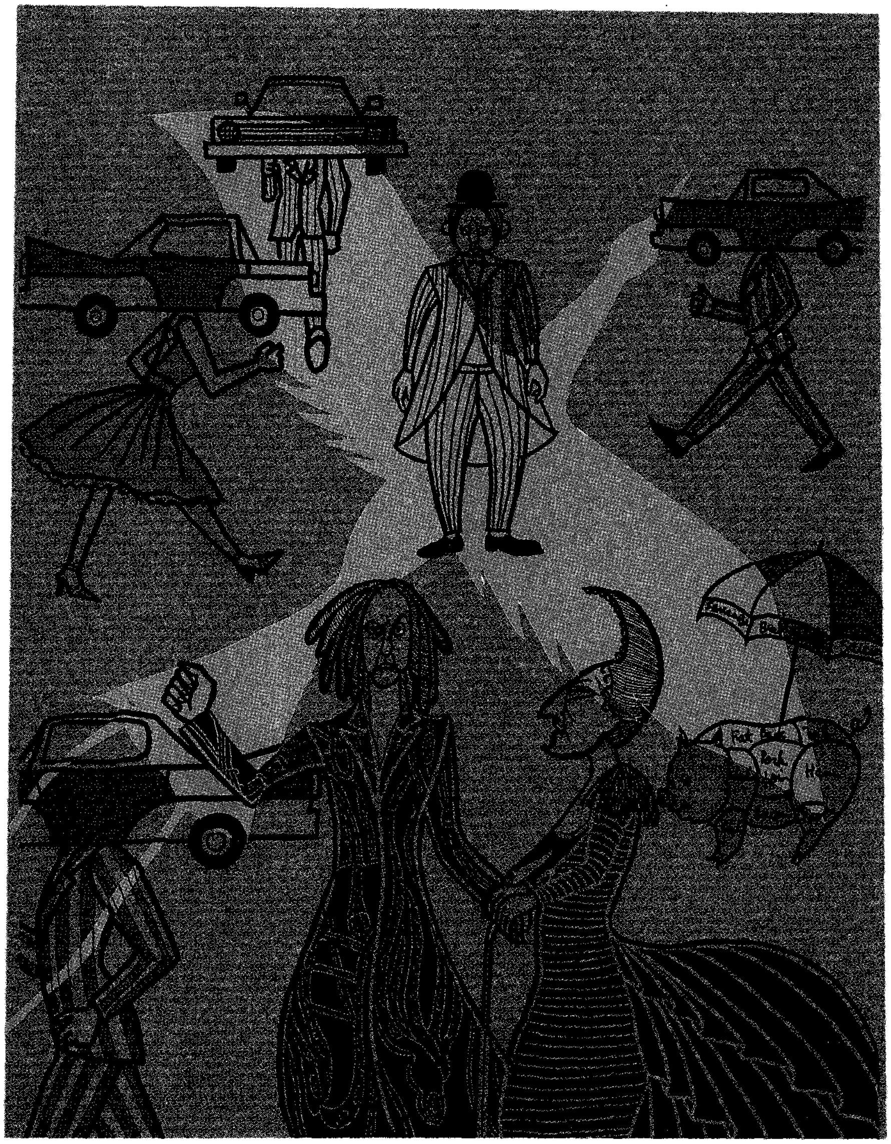
SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
The musical, based on the 1977 film. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SWING!
A musical salute to the genre, directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE TIME OF THE CUCKOO
Arthur Laurents' 1953 play, set in Venice, stars Debra Munk as a romantically deprived American woman (or spinster, as they called them in the old days) who gets a chance at a vacation affair with an Italian shop owner. It's a lovely production of a dated play, with roundly good acting. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes May 7.)

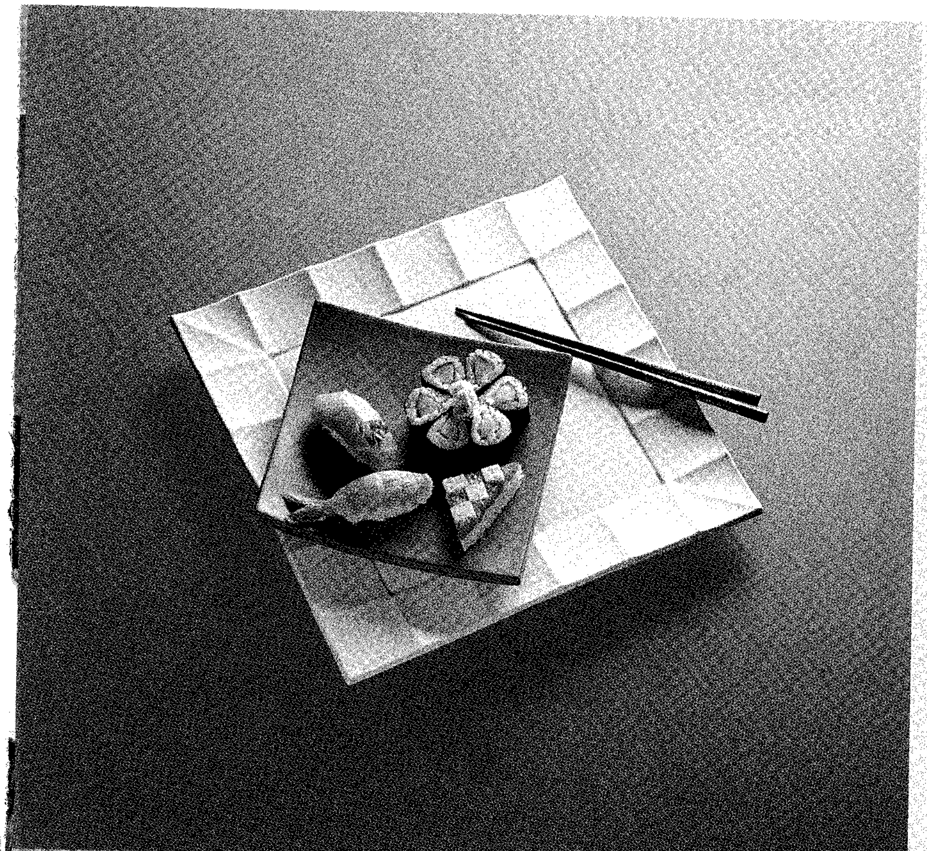
TRUE WEST
A thrilling revival of Sam Shepard's 1980 play, directed by Matthew Warchus. It's a droll tall tale of sibling rivalry, in which an intrusive, beer-swilling outlaw named Lee and his brother, Austin, a put-upon Ivy League screenwriter, face off in their vacationing mother's tidy modern kitchen. John C. Reilly's roaring, as Lee, and Philip Seymour Hoffman's repressed hostility, as Austin, make for a wonderful contrast and a satisfyingly equal battle of wills, but when the actors switch roles (every few performances), Hoffman's derelict eyes, slurred sea-dog voice, and preternatural comic skills make the contest entertaining but lopsided. (3/27/00) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

WAITING IN THE WINGS
In the best of Noël Coward's postwar plays, old gallant theatricals duke it out in a retirement home, where they fire off some terrific one-liners. Although the play itself is somewhat creaky, the pros who bring it to life here aren't. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)



"The Green Bird," by Carlo Gozzi, staged by Julie Taymor.

HIROSHI TANABE



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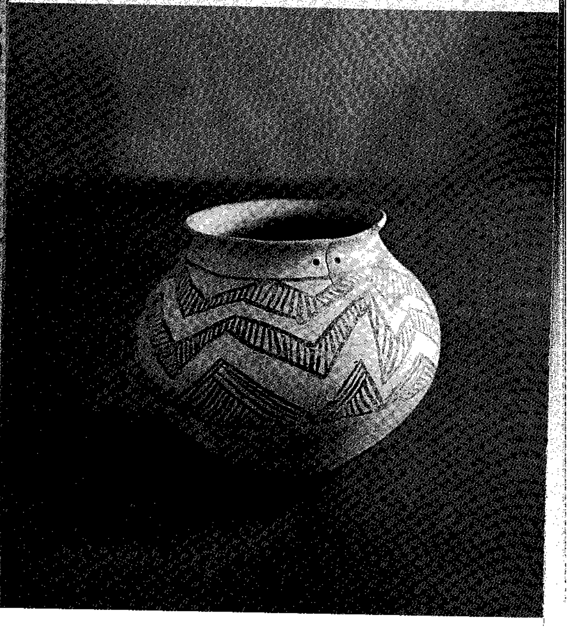

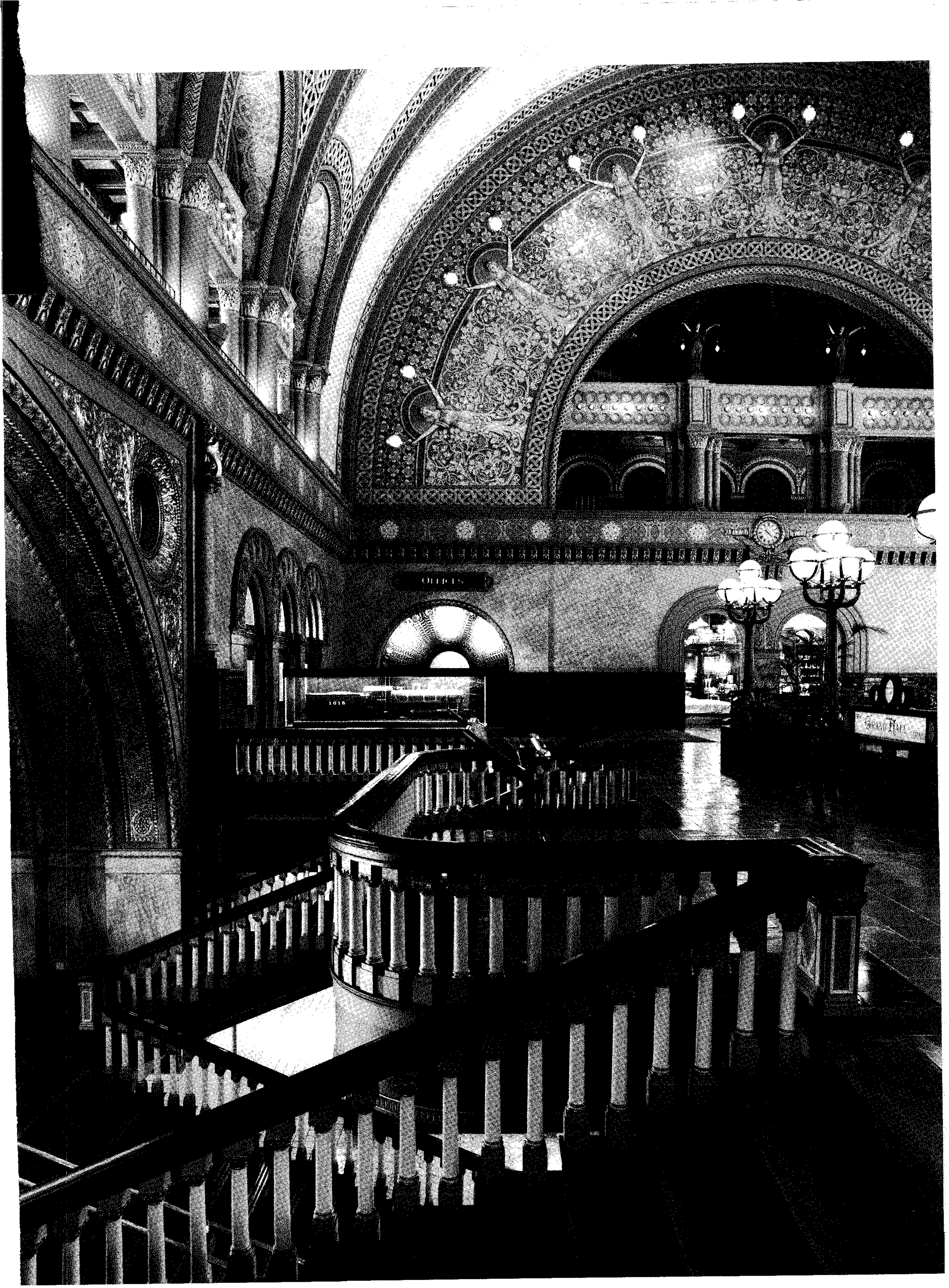
OFFICES
1015
GRAND HALL

THE WAVERLY GALLERY
Eileen Heckart portrays an aging Greenwich Village art dealer who must give up her gallery, in a new play by Kenneth Lonergan. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

THE WILD PARTY
Joseph Moncure March's Jazz Age poem is the basis for Michael John LaChiusa and George C. Wolfe's new musical, starring Mandy Patinkin, Eartha Kitt, and Toni Collette. Mr. Wolfe is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CATS
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

DAME EDNA: THE ROYAL TOUR
Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

THE FANTASTICKS
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.

FOOTLOOSE
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY
Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.

FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

FULLY COMMITTED
Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

JEKYLL & HYDE
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

MISS SAIGON
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.

OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

"PLATÉE"
The Mark Morris Dance Group appears in the New York City Opera's production of Jean-Philippe Rameau's opera-ballet about a self-involved swamp frog tricked into believing that the god Jupiter is in love with her. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. April 18 at 7:30 and April 20 and April 22 at 8.)

THE 'GRASS IS GREENER *While top British pop bands like Blur and Oasis spent the late nineties getting grumpy, the London trio Supergrass opted for a fast, fearless brand of fun, releasing a pair of brilliantly hyperkinetic records that drew on everything from the Kinks to Cheap Trick. The band's third record downshifts to somewhat slower tempos, raising the dreaded spectre of maturity; live at the Bowery Ballroom, however, expect adrenaline-rush anthems. Oasis who?*

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The opening of the spring season. April 25 at 8: "Symphony in Three Movements," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Western Symphony," and "Symphony in C." ♦ April 26 at 8: "The Beethoven Seventh," "Stabat Mater," and "Symphony in C." ♦ April 27 at 8: "Square Dance," "In the Night," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," and "Western Symphony." ♦ April 28 at 8: "Square Dance," the première of an untitled work by Christopher Wheeldon, and "West Side Story Suite." ♦ April 29 at 2: "The Beethoven Seventh," "In the Night," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," and "Western Symphony." ♦ April 29 at 8: "Symphony in Three Movements," "Stabat Mater," and "West Side Story Suite." ♦ April 30 at 3: "Mozartiana," the new Wheeldon ballet, and "West Side Story Suite." ♦ May 2 at 8: "Mozartiana," "Stabat Mater," and "Glass Pieces." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 25.)

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH
April 19 at 8: "Aurora I," "Aurora II," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ April 20 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Coup de Couperin," and "The Jig Is Up." ♦ April 21 at 8: "Consort," "Echo," "Yo Shakespeare," and "Felix: The Ballet." ♦ April 22 at 2: A family matinée. ♦ April 22 at 8: "Contra Pose," "Kore," "Yo Shakespeare," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ April 23 at noon: A family matinée. ♦ April 23 at 4: "Contra Pose," "Apple Pie," and "The Jig Is Up." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

COMPAGNIE MARIE CHOUINARD
Three dancers (Luci Mongrain, Carole Prieur, and Elise Vanderborght) take turns onstage, in a retrospective of the Canadian choreographer's distinctively bestial and erotic solo works. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. April 26-29 at 8 and April 30 at 2 and 8.)

"HI EVERYBODY!"
The choreographer Tere O'Connor reprises his pivotal 1999 work, in which he tested the satiric performance skills of his gifted dancers. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. April 20-22 at 8 and April 23 at 3.)

"FRACTURED LIGHT"
The dancer and choreographer Stefa Zawerucha performs a solo based on interviews with lighting designers, which serve as a sort of score to the choreography. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 20-23 at 7:30.)

"COMPLETELY ATTACHED TO DELUSION"
For the title work, David Neumann dances while performance poet John Giorno reads from his latest verse. For the curtain closer, Neumann uses square dance and other Appalachian traditions to explore cultural bonds. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 20-23 at 8:30.)

"THE BEAT"
Former "Stomp" member Kamal Sinclair collaborates with playwright Robbie McCauley and poet Mustafa Shakir in a dance-theatre work that features Bakaari Wilder, the slack and lanky tapper whose easy cool countered Savion Glover's percussive heat in "Bring in da Noise." (Context Studios, 28 Avenue A, at 2nd St. 802-9350. April 20-22 and April 27-29 at 8.)

"STORMING HEAVEN"
Sally Silvers & Dancers careen through the turbulence of the century past (the Paris Communes, the Zapatista revolution, the Cuban revolution). The company includes such stellar dancers as Kate Gyllenhaal, David Neumann, Cydney Wilkes, and Paige Martin. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. April 26-29 at 8.)

"THE AMBER ROOM"
The choreographer Zvi Gotheiner moves his company from room to room of the Angel Orensanz Foundation, a former Lower East Side synagogue, in a work inspired by an extravagant Russian structure—a room carved completely out of amber—that was dismantled by the Nazis and promptly disappeared. (172 Norfolk St. 925-0916. April 20-21 at 8 and April 24-28 at 8.)

"FACE THE MUSIC AND DANCE"
Choreographers and composers collaborate. Clarinettist Don Byron and Mark Dendy Dance Theatre perform in "Jam," and Shapiro and Smith Dance join forces with composer Scott Killian for "Routine," about Borscht Belt comedians. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. April 27-29 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

FRED HERSCH
Hersch's unabashed allegiance to both jazz and classical music will be on display as this exceptional pianist offers works by Strayhorn, Ravel, Scriabin, Debussy, Bach, Bernstein, and Monk, as well as his own compositions, accompanied by his trio and the Concordia Orchestra. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. April 27 at 8.)

LEAH TINARI

San Andreas fault, as felt by the RX 300.

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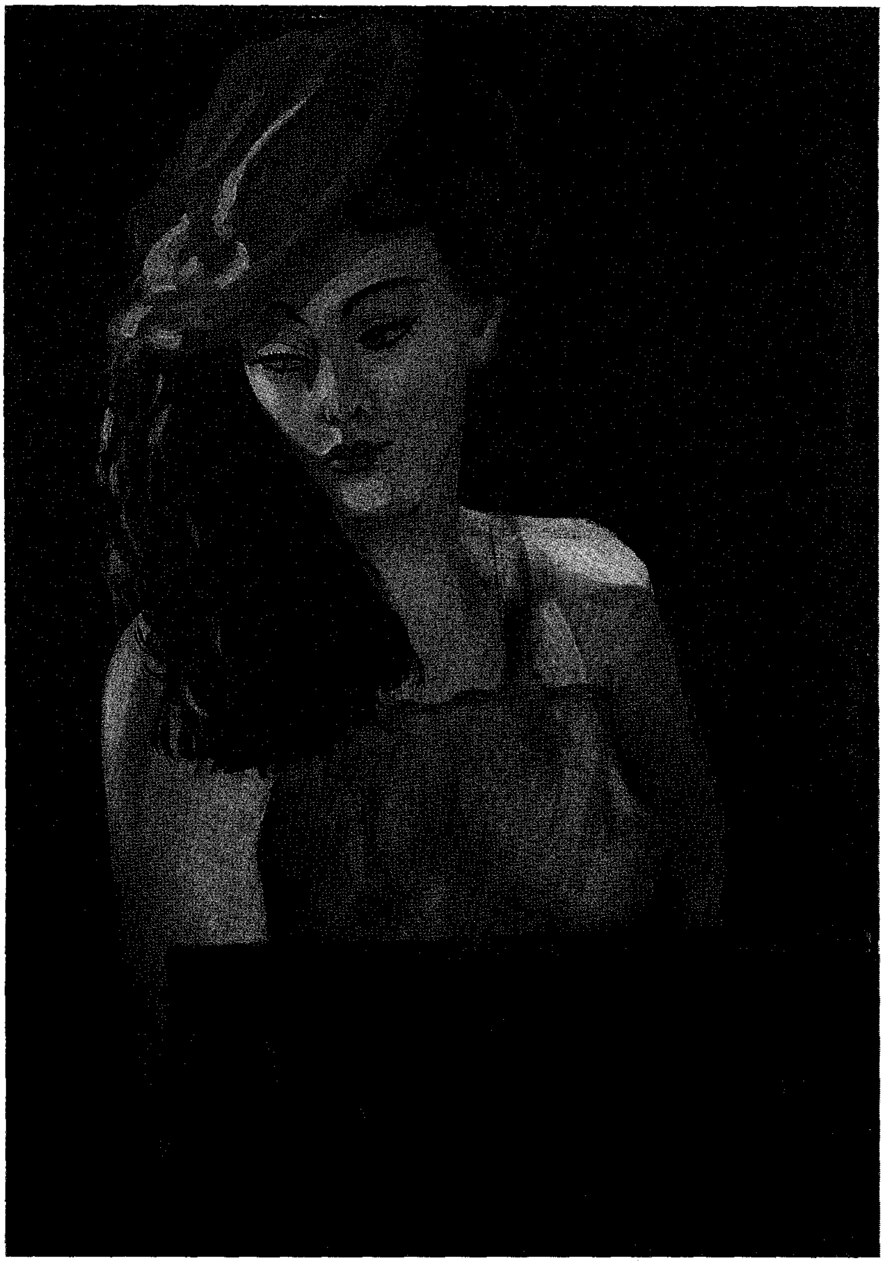

"Woman with a Red Hat," by Francis Picabia, at Werner.

UTE LEMPER

The leather-clad German chanteuse, best known for her recent stage work in "Chicago," performs new songs by Elvis Costello, Nick Cave, and Tom Waits taken from her avant-pop début, "Punishing Kiss." (Town Hall. April 28 at 8.)

JOE SATTRIANI

On his new album, "Engines of Creation," Sattriani, a hirsute guitar hero from Long Island, proves that histrionic fret work and endlessly indulgent instrumental music are as healthy as ever. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. April 28 at 8.)

BENNY GOLSON

Tenor saxophonist Golson, with his brawny tone, full-throttle energy, and impeccable credentials (the Jazztet, Blakey's Jazz Messengers), is a genuine hard-bop hero. He's also one of the finest jazz composers around, with at least three classics to his name: "I Remember Clifford," "Whisper Not," and "Stablemates." (Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, 58 Seventh Ave., Brooklyn. 718-622-3300. April 29 at 8.)

OASIS

The Gallagher brothers may own their native England, but their band continues its attempt to win over the currently Brit-pop-phobic American record-buying masses. The group's latest CD, "Standing on the Shoulder of Giants," is a laughably derivative, yet irresistible, homage to the Beatles, T Rex, and other redcoats of old. With **Travis,** a wistful Scottish quartet currently enjoying No. 1 status across the pond. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. May 1 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOTTOM LINE

15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—April 20: The one-time Rolling Stones guitarist **Mick Taylor** stops by with his Blues Band. April 26: During the eighties, the witty and vastly underappreciated singer-songwriter **Jules Shear** was an untouchable cult hero. In the nineties, he remained sub-rosa until two years ago, when he popped up with an inspired album of duets, "Between Us." His most recent disk, "Allow Me," is a solo project rife with insinuating melodies and clever but poignant lyrics.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—April 20 and April 27: The trademark jerky little pop songs of **They Might Be Giants.** April 28-29: **Supergrass.**

BROWNIES

169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—April 23: New Jersey's **Radio 4** does a fine job of updating the post-punk sounds of the Clash and Gang of Four. With the loose sixties-style garage rock of the **Mooney Suzuki.** April 29: **Tara Jane O'Neil,** who has sung for such bands as Rodan, Retsin, and the Sonara Pine. With **Naysayer** and the **Pacific Ocean.** April 30: The **Up On In,** former Jawbox drummer Zach Barocas's new band, turns out brief but complex instrumental songs built around Barocas's shifting beats, the tight bass work of Charlie Bennett, and the sharp-edged guitar playing of Ryan Grayson.

FEZ

380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—April 28: **Chocolate Genius** is Marc Anthony Thompson, a vocalist with a gift for incisive personal narratives and an emotionally keyed-up delivery. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 19: **Willie Nelson.** The grizzled highwayman is fresh off two recordings in the past two years—one a flamenco-influenced disk that showcased his vocal maturity and the other an instrumental jazz album that demonstrated his still-active imagination. April 20: Cuban trumpeter Jesús Alemmañy's multigenerational ensemble **¡Cubanismo!** may not have won a Grammy, as did its more famous counterpart, the Buena Vista Social Club, but it successfully marries old-timers' experience and younger musicians' enthusiasm to keep alive *son,* mambo, and *descarga* music. April 21: **Moxy Früvous.** Harmonizing and high jinks with the former buskers from Toronto, whose latest album, "Thornhill," benefits from the mature touch of R.E.M. producer Don Dixon. April 25-26: The extended, introspective post-punk of Doug Martsch's **Built to Spill.** April 28: Having earned post-punk immortality as the force behind Hüsker Dü and pop kudos with the more nuanced, misanthropic Sugar, **Bob Mould** has now entered the elder-statesman phase of his complicated career. ◆ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—April 30: The young lead singer of **Antony and the Johnsons Orchestra** possesses a sweet and haunting voice reminiscent of Brian Ferry and a theatrical, pansexual stage presence that recalls early Marc Bolan.

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 28: After getting bounced last year from the label V2, guitarist and singer Howe Gelb's long-running alternative-country-punk conglomerate **Giant Sand** returns to its independent roots with its latest album, "Chore of Enchantment," which is on the spritely little Chicago label Thrill Jockey. April 29: What with their Marlboro Man looks and their slithering, down-and-dirty velvet-metal sound, **Girls Against Boys** have an effortless sex appeal that most indie bands would trade their well-studied geek cool for in a minute. With **Enon,** a new band featuring former Brainiac guitarist John Schmersal and Skeleton Key percussionists Rick Lee and Steve Calhoon.

S.O.B.'S

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Such recent neo-soul stars as Lauren Hill, Erykah Badu, and D'Angelo have seen their careers blossom in a row long tilled by **Angie Stone** (here April 21 and April 23). In the early nineties, the Columbia, South Carolina, native founded the critically acclaimed trio Vertical Hold and co-wrote a number of tracks on D'Angelo's début album, "Brown Sugar," and his follow-up disk, "Voodoo." D'Angelo returns the favor by helping with a song on her recent solo début, "Black Diamond," which is lush with Stone's deep, soulful alto. April 27-28: Nigeria's utmost musical states-

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man, **King Sunny Ade,** travels with eighteen musicians in his band, and he makes exuberant music full of elegantly intoned talking drums, slinking guitar, and powerful vocal choruses. Dining.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—**Big Lazy,** the sophisticated yet gritty instrumental trio led by the extraordinary guitarist Stephen Ulrich, stops by for a midnight show on April 21. The band, which was formerly known as Lazy Boy and recently lost a long-running battle with the La-Z-Boy corporation over its name, plays stunningly beautiful music that evokes everything from truckers' romps to the haunting film scores of Bernard Herrmann. April 30: The exceptional Cuban guitarist and singer **Juan-Carlos Formell** shares the stage with the singer **Alma Rosa,** a childhood friend from Havana, who is making her United States début.

WETLANDS
161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—April 29: The staccato, tremolo-ridden guitar of **Dick Dale.** Surf's up!

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—April 22: The broad-minded reeds player **Matt Darriau** stops by with his ensemble Ballin' the Jack, which explores Duke Ellington's early "jungle" repertoire. April 27: A South African expatriate whose phenomenal electric-bass playing has been drawing comparisons to the legendary Jaco Pastorious, **Richard Bonas** has a secret weapon: he can also sing.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—April 20-22: In a part-time partnership well into its third decade, flutist **Elise Wood** brings out the romanticist in hard-bop pianist **John Hicks;** special guest saxophonist **Bobby Watson** will make sure Hicks's fighting spirit remains strong. April 27-29: The **John Pizzarelli** trio. Pizzarelli is an exceedingly talented singer, guitarist, and bandleader; he and his light-on-their-feet sidemen, pianist **Ray Kennedy** and bassist **Martin Pizzarelli,** adore the American songbook repertoire and pre-bop verities. Even without a drummer in sight, this threesome will have no problem swinging all night long. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through April 23: **Dr. John,** the great New Orleans pianist, singer, and musical repository, is as susceptible to the charms of Duke Ellington's music as the rest of us. The big difference between Dr. John and the rest of us, of course, is that he can transform his passion into music; his new CD, "Duke Elegant," gives some of the Maestro's lesser-known compositions, along with some of his best-known ones, the gumbo treatment. April 25-30: Gospel, pop, and jazz mingle in the vocal blend of **Take 6,** whose enthusiasm matches their luminous harmonies.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through April 29, **Barbara Cook.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Peter Mintun** is in attendance, also through April 29.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through April 23: The **Dee Dee Jackson** quintet. Jackson, in a way-too-early mid-life crisis, has made an abrupt about-face from acerbic avant-garde pianist to plugged-in fusionmeister. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—April 19-23: The **Mose Allison** quartet. Behind Allison's laid-back Mississippi charm lies the mind of a killer. Lyrically dismembering hypocrites is a full-time job, but Allison somehow finds time to slip in some wonderfully eccentric piano playing alongside his blues drawl. Dining.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—April 28-29: The **George Coleman** quartet. Saxophonist Coleman's a marvel. There isn't a player who knows his instrument better, nor one who feels as compelled to hit a musical home run with each expansive solo.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through April 23: The celebrated pianist **Geri Allen** may be the most accomplished player of her generation; perhaps that contributed to her selection as the first-ever pianist in Ornette Coleman's band. Allen cuts a brazen swath through nearly a century of jazz-piano idioms, all buffed to a modernist sheen. April 25-30: The **Joshua Redman** quartet. With a new, guitarless band that includes the vital drummer **Greg Hutchinson** and a batch of fresh original tunes that avoid the pop trimmings of his last few recordings, saxophonist Redman looks to be getting back on the mainstream track with his latest release, "Beyond." The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

TABLES FOR TWO

CANTEEN
142 Mercer St., at Prince St. (431-7676)—It's all about the chairs—flared orange-wool-and-aluminum pods created with muscle-car machismo by Marc Newson, who drew on his experience designing jet interiors. Everything in the underground room, from the gray racing-striped walls to the waiters' U.P.S.-style uniforms, steers attention back to the chairs. Never before has a restaurant's seating so completely upstaged its menu.

Celebrity sightings were initially the biggest draw, when the place opened last October, but Canteen's hotspotness is cooling—Page Six canoodling appears to be on the wane. Maybe the restaurant's plan was always just to play hectic food court to the tasteful mall that SoHo has become. All kinds of leather trousers, both malevolent and benign, can be seen here, and a ruckus is always on the verge of overflowing the bar, where leering off-duty suits outyell couples anxious about the long wait for a table. The dining room attracts fashionable Europeans chasing a lost vision of the neighborhood's exclusivity.

It's an environment in which the food nearly escapes notice: the stealthy menu, with its stencilled G.I. Joe logotype, has no identity, but it doesn't much matter what you order—everything is good and hearty and entirely beside the point. The rotisserie-chicken Cobb salad is tossed tableside, and the fresh, plump Peekytoe crab cake is a triumph in a city overrun with sawdust versions. Rack of lamb, served with cheese-drenched gnocchi, and a respectable Black Angus sirloin stand out among the entrées. And this is the place for macaroni and cheese—it's made with Asiago and baked with bread crumbs and just couldn't be better. Only the lobster-and-cod pan roast is a letdown, chewy and bland. Making a dessert decision is just as easy: mocha baked Alaska, rice pudding, and warm mini-doughnuts are sloppy, happy desserts.

And the chairs—are they comfortable? They'd be fine at Mach One. They cradle the body and minimize G force, but the room is so noisy that, in order to converse, diners have to lean forward throughout the meal. Still, half the fun of this luxurious rec room is making a racket, so the best thing to do is bring your own party, commandeer a banquette, and let the shouting begin. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $13-$26.)

—*Owen Phillips*

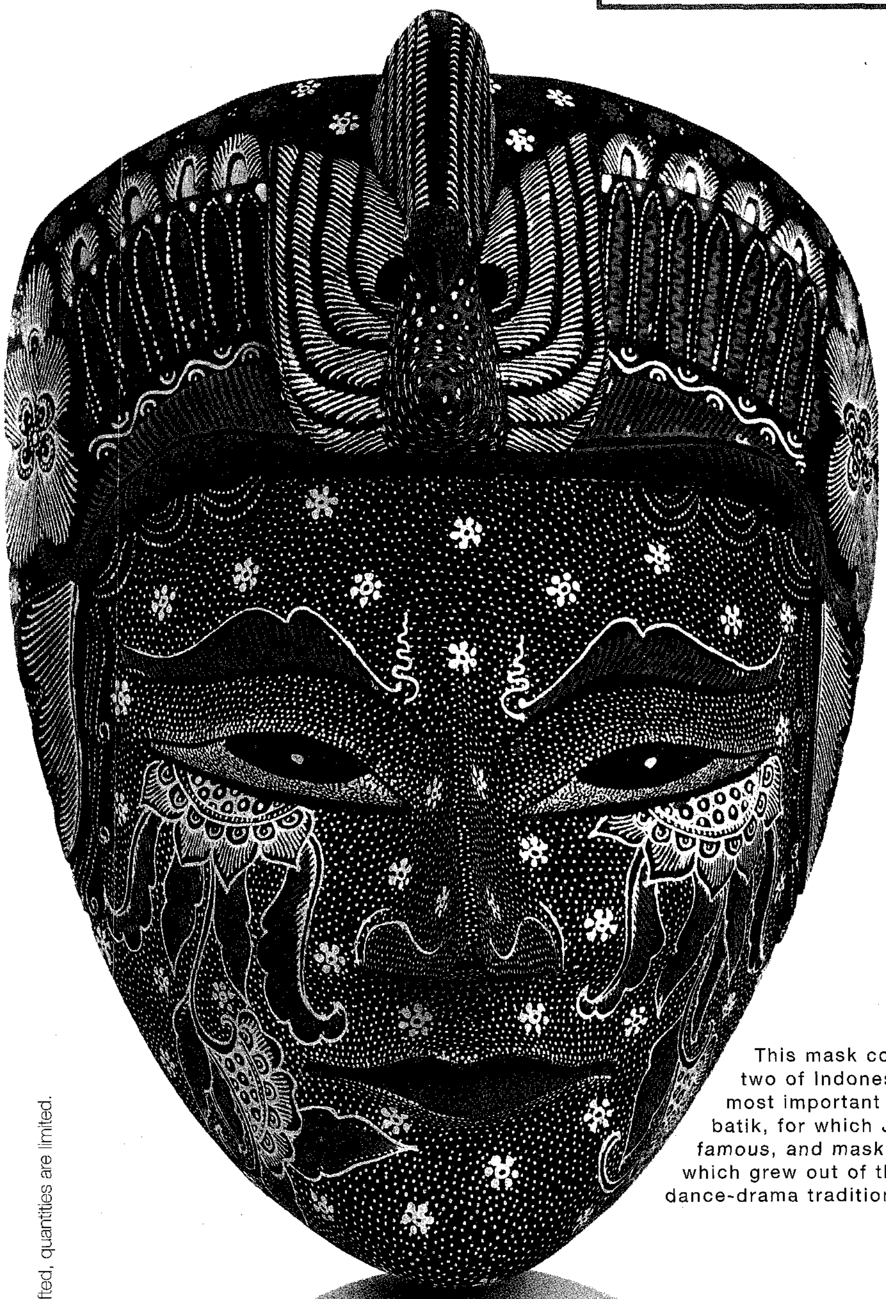
ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—A quarter century after it was first exhibited at the Met, the collection of the world's preëminent Japanophile, Mary Griggs Burke, is on view again. The two hundred or so works included in this exhibition represent only a fifth of Griggs's entire collection, but they have a vast range nonetheless, covering five thousand years of Japanese history. Beginning with a spectacular, mysterious Jomon-period pot from approximately 2500 B.C., the collection follows up with a stunning procession of Buddhist and Shinto sculpture, lacquerware, calligraphy, and prints, which carries the development of Japanese art up through the late nineteenth century. The centerpiece of the show, however, is Burke's collection of standing screens, with their views of village and country life glimpsed between wandering gold-leaf clouds. Through June 25. ♦ **"Painters in Paris: 1895-1950"** presents more than a hundred modernist works from the museum's collection, by thirty-eight masters. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Walker Evans,"** a comprehensive retrospective, the photographer's first. Through May 14. ♦ **"The World of Scholar's Rocks."** Through Aug. 20. ♦ **"Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt."** Through May 7. ♦ **"Tilman Riemenschneider: Master Sculptor of the Late Middle Ages."** Through May 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—MOMA goes multiplex with the launch of **"Making Choices,"** the first eleven segments of an eventual twenty-four-part show all concentrating on works made between 1920 and 1960. As they did for the recent "People, Places and Things," the curators have drawn exclusively from the museum's extensive holdings to mount the show. But while that sprawling trilogy was a little disjointed, this show offers a series of tightly focussed exhibitions, several devoted to a single artist. A small gallery on the first floor features the lush photography of Man Ray; its larger next-door neighbor displays architectural drawings and models by Louis Kahn. On the second floor the succinctly titled "War" pairs photographs from the U.S. naval archives with Picasso's gut-wrenching grisaille painting "The Charnel House," from 1945, which echoes his masterpiece "Guernica." After that, happening upon the installation of etchings by still-life maestro Giorgio Morandi is strange, but soothing. Curator Robert Storr's contribution, "Modern Art Despite Modernism," charts the course of representational painting and includes a gorgeous Alex Katz portrait of his wife, Ada, which is so vital that it makes the models in the Philip Pearlstein painting to its right look like specimens on a mortuary slab. Through July 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—With green laser beams ricocheting through a six-story waterfall, and hundreds of TV screens providing ambient noise and light, the Nam June Paik retrospective looks, from ground level, like a sure-fire crowd-pleaser. Instead it leaves one disenchanted and puzzled. For the most part, the father of video art comes off as an unexpectedly slight figure, a likable, playful avant-gardist whose imaginative resources have seldom matched his commitment to the idea of innovation. Through April 26. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The Whitney **2000 Biennial Exhibition,** with ninety-seven artists (painters, sculptors, photographers, and installation and Internet artists, as well as videographers and filmmakers) chosen by a team of six curators. Through June 4. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

~~Every object tells~~

a story

thai rain drums

tuareg hats

turkish urns

indonesian sarongs

italian chess sets

senegalese ostrich eggs

yixing teapots

russian birch bark boxes

oaxacan carvings

japanese yukata robes

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BORDERS®

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The newly renovated Hayden Planetarium lets you enjoy a twenty-minute cosmic journey, narrated by Tom Hanks, which goes from Earth to the Milky Way out to the Virgo Supercluster, then through a black hole right back home. Reservations for regular Space Shows are advised, and available at 769-5200. ♦ **"Body Art: Marks of Identity."** Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"The Guennol Collection: Cabinet of Wonders"** presents more than forty objects donated by the museum patrons Alastair Bradley Martin and his wife, Edith Park Martin, whose collection is noted for its range—the exhibit includes a Cornell box, a carved Zuni frog, a Babylonian dog sculpture, and a Beatrix Potter watercolor. Through May 7. ♦ **"Hiroshige: One Hundred Famous Views of Edo"** showcases the museum's complete set, one of the finest extant, by the influential master of the wood-block print. Through April 23. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JENNIFER BARTLETT
The master of the dotty grid is back. The most interesting paintings here introduce a new image in the artist's lexicon—the monster—and the best of these, "Reading," looks like the Venus of Willendorf as rendered in Benday dots by Matisse. Another, in which a flock of ghouls tote little red wagons, plays with shaped canvases and calls to mind Elizabeth Murray, whose star ascended at the same time (the mid-seventies) and in the same place (Paula Cooper Gallery) as Bartlett's. But a group of bright abstractions are little more than egregious decoration. Through May 13. (Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.)

ANTHONY CARO
A selection of early works, made between 1964 and 1972, by the great English sculptor. Caro's painted-steel constructions have a decisive spareness that's akin to minimalism, but they deign to engage the eye; they're playful rather than ideological. "Table Piece LXXVIII," for example, irresistibly suggests an arrangement of fractured plates and bowls, balanced precariously on a ledge, ready to plummet at the slightest touch. It's an abstraction, a still-life, and a pratfall, all at once. Through April 22. (Ameringer Howard, 41 E. 57th St. 935-1110.)

PAUL GEORGES
For almost fifty years, Georges has brought shouting color and a seductively deft, simplified draftsmanship to everything he paints, whether it's a still-life, a gaggle of nude models, or a giant allegory of his own ongoing battle with old age. Georges's brash, flat style has a lot in common with that of Alex Katz, but without Katz's emotional reticence; Georges is pure candor, on a billboard scale. To paint a still-life, he sets a crate in the middle of a meadow, puts a vase of tulips on top, and paints a sunny triumphant icon, so fresh and bright that it seems to say "Howdy!" Through April 29. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606.)

DAN GRAHAM
If you think you've landed in a day-care center instead of a gallery when you step off the elevator, you're right. This conceptual kingpin's latest installation—a variation on his renowned glass pavilions—is geared toward the Pokémon set and features a cartoon-video library, live Internet connection, and CD-ROMs, all selected by the artist. There's even a stack of comic books for old-media types. Curved walls of smoky two-way mirrors produce distorted reflections that add to the funhouse atmosphere. Through May 20. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

BILL JENSEN
Working on handmade paper with a notoriously crotchety medium—egg tempera thickened with oil and dry pigment—the artist has produced a group of lovely calligraphic improvisations.

Vanessa Beecroft, at the Intrepid (see Above and Beyond).

TODD EBERLE

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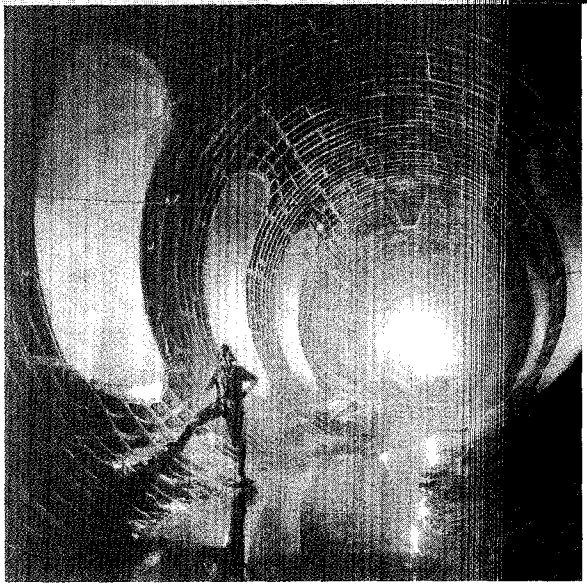

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There's a family resemblance to Sigmar Polke's spill paintings, and to recent Brice Marden works, but it doesn't feel distracting. With their puddling, semi-opaque viscosity, Jensen's brushstrokes seem like ceramic glazes, congealing into spidery, unanticipated patterns. Through April 29. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.)

FRANCIS PICABIA
This Franco-Iberian painter and bon vivant (1879-1953) is the Rickey Henderson of early-twentieth-century art: never a team player, but nonetheless a stellar presence on a series of historic squads (the Fauvists, the Cubists, the Dadaists, et al.). The Werner gallery has gathered some beautiful examples of Picabia's various styles—from the somewhat doctrinal Cubist and machinist works to such endearing and influential later work as the "transparencies" (a strategy pilfered by Salle, Pollock, and Polke, to name just a few of the iconoclasts who have worshipped him) and the kitschy canvases of Picabia's final years, with their images lovingly repainted from pulp sources. Through June 3. (Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.)

Short List

ALICE DALTON BROWN
Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345.
Through May 26.

FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH
Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 744-2300.
Through July 15.

LUCIAN FREUD
Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St. 734-6300.
Through May 19.

RICHARD LONG
James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St.
755-7171. Through May 13.

FAIRFIELD PORTER
AXA, Seventh Ave. at 52nd St. 554-4818.
Through May 27.

SUSAN ROWLAND
Ganz, 25 E. 73rd St. 535-1977.
Through April 28.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

JONATHAN HOROWITZ
This artist's conceptual shtick has provided a bright spot in recent group shows (drawings based on Stairmaster L.E.D. displays are one example), but he falls flat in this solo effort. A ring of seven monitors chronicles the artist's thirty-two years, with captions and the occasional film or television clip. Like life (as opposed to art), the titles creep along at a petty pace—"1968-1973: Jar of Pee" vies with "1994-2000: Why Does Jay Gorney Hate Me?"—as does the accompanying soundtrack, a rambling monologue recorded by the artist a week before the show. Through April 31. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770.)

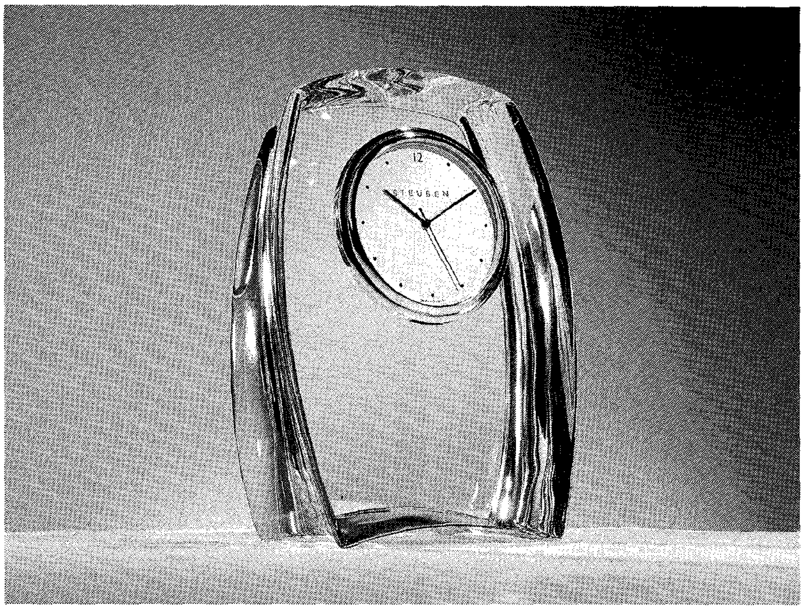
IÑIGO MANGLANO-OVALLE
One of the highlights of the current Whitney Biennial is this Chicago-based, Spanish-born artist's video installation, in which he washes the windows of Mies van der Rohe's glass masterpiece, the Farnsworth House. Transparency and architectural icons strike again in "Climate," a multichannel work, set in Mies's Lake Shore Drive apartments. An enigmatic narrative involving surveillance, meteorological and otherwise, plays out across multiple screens against a soundtrack of Korean forecasts and lilting lullabies. Through April 29. (Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999.)

Short List

JANET COHEN
Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937.
Through May 13.

STEVE DI BENEDETTO
Baumgartner, 418 W. 15th St. 633-2276.
Through May 27.

CAIO FONSECA
Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St.
563-4474. Through May 13.



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KATHARINA FRITSCH
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.
Through June 23.
PIPILOTTI RIST
Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St.
206-9100. Through May 27.
RUDOLF STINGEL
Paula Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.
Through June 3.
MAKI TAMURA
AC Project Room, 453 W. 17th St. 645-4970.
Through May 13.
ANDREA ZITTEL
Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.
Through May 27.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

JAMES CASTLE
Haunting domestic landscapes and interiors by a self-taught artist. Born in Idaho in 1900, the deaf-mute Castle, who died in 1977, refused to study sign language and never learned to read or write. But he communicated eloquently through intimate drawings rendered with soot and spit on found paper, using a sharpened stick in lieu of a brush—materials he preferred to more conventional art supplies. A sense of isolation permeates these sparrow-colored pictures of empty rooms and farmyards, which feel more like memories than places. Through May 4. (The Drawing Center, 40 Wooster St. 219-2166.)

Short List

INGRID CALAME
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through April 27.
CHUCK CLOSE
Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St.
431-9224. Through May 6.
JACQUELINE GOUREVITCH
DFN Gallery, 560 Broadway. 334-3400.
Through May 13.
RICHARD LONG
Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.
431-3685. Through April 29.
ROBERT SMITHSON
Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.
Through May 12.

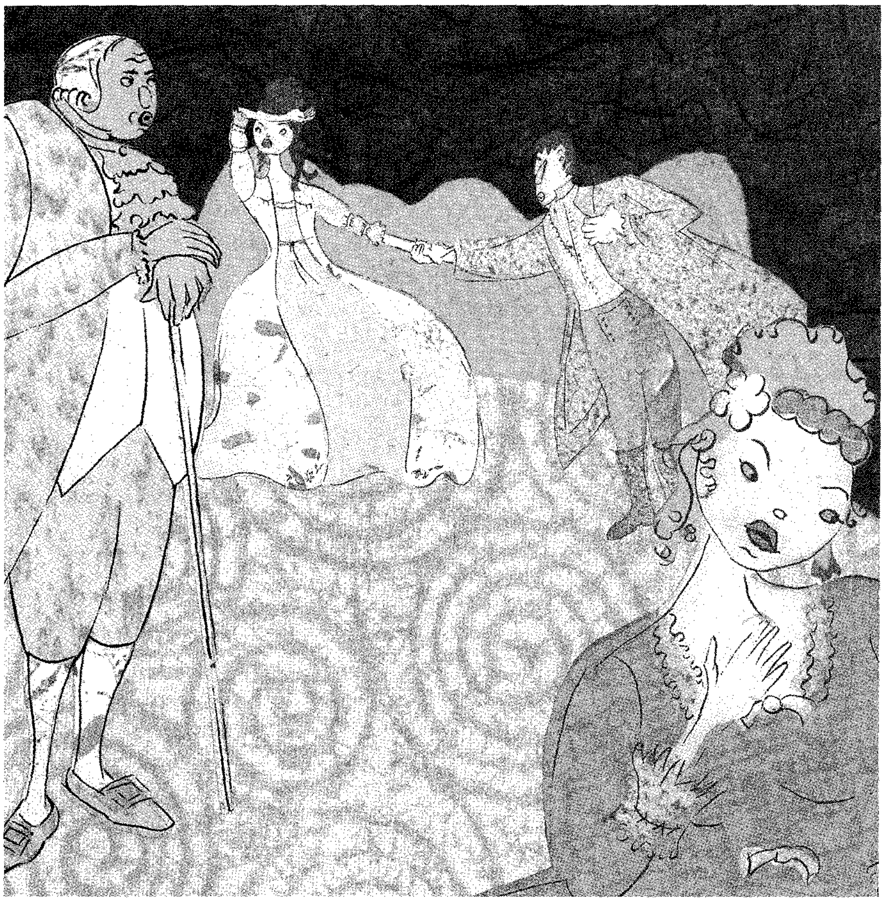
PHOTOGRAPHY

THERESE MITCHELL
Former *New Yorker* staff writer Joseph Mitchell, subject of the film "Joe Gould's Secret," wasn't the only artist in his family. During the nineteen-thirties and forties, his wife, Therese, roamed the streets alongside him, snapping away with her Rolleiflex. Therese's photographs went into storage after her death, in 1979, and were only rediscovered recently. The eighteen small, sharp photos shown here, which range from reportorial images of Depression-era unrest to frank portraits, are a visual companion to her husband's profiles. Through May 14. (The Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison Ave., at 51st St. 935-3960.)
JINDRICH STREIT
Jindrich Streit documented Czech village life until he was jailed in 1982 for his work. Photographs from his return to the region in the early nineties show a new optimism—farmers joke with their goats, monks pray before modern farm equipment, and a group of schoolgirls wearing gas masks pose proudly under a photo of Vaclav Havel. Through April 29. (SoHo Photo, 15 White St. 226-8571.)
"HARLEM"
This clear-eyed look at the famous neighborhood includes photographs by Jules Allen, Gerald Cyrus, Ozier Muhammad, Gordon Parks, Frank Stewart, Budd Williams, and others. Through May 20. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051.)
"MENTORS"
Graduating School of Visual Arts students show work overseen by gurus of their own choosing. Not everyone here is ready for prime time, but it may be worth a trip to see who is under whose wing; mentors include prominent artists, gallery owners, editors, and critics. Through April 29. (Tribeca Arts Club, 100 Reade St. 592-2010.)
INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—**"Picturing Business: The Photography of *Fortune* Magazine."** Margaret Bourke-White got the ball rolling in *Fortune's* 1930 inaugural issue with a photo-essay on a hog-processing plant. Her elegant black-and-white, Machine Age patterns avoid outright gore, but we wind up staring down the slope of a vast mountain of pig dust. Walker Evans is the star here, not only because his rare, unpublished pictures dominate the show but because his position as special photography editor for *Fortune* allowed him to involve the likes of Robert Frank, whose bemused series on commuting fat cats was decidedly not capitalistic propaganda. Through May 14. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

KATE BELTON
P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642.
Through April 29.
TERRY EVANS
Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.
Through May 20.
"SELF-PORTRAITS & PHOTOGRAPHERS AT WORK"
De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.
Through June 17.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum.



The Manhattan School of Music Opera Theatre presents Cimarosa's eighteenth-century comic opera "Il Matrimonio Segreto," at Borden Auditorium.

ANNABELLE VERHOYE

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"La Bohème," with Nuccia Focile, Nancy Gustafson, Franco Farina, and Rodney Gilfry; conducted by Plácido Domingo. (April 19 at 8:30, April 26 at 8, and April 29 at 12:30.) ♦ With Nello Santi conducting. (April 22 at 8:30.) ♦ **"Pelléas et Mélisande,"** with Dawn Upshaw, Nadine Denize, Dwayne Croft, Frederick Burchinal, and Robert Lloyd; James Levine. (April 20 at 8.) ♦ **"Rigoletto,"** with Youngok Shin, Frank Lopardo, and Kim Josephson; Mr. Santi. (April 21 at 8.) ♦ **"Götterdämmerung,"** with Jane Eaglen, Sondra Radvanovsky, Felicity Palmer, Stig Andersen, Alan Held, Ekkehard Wlaschiha, and Eric Halfvarson; Mr. Levine. (April 22 at noon.) ♦ With Wolfgang Neumann instead of Mr. Andersen. (April 29 at 6.) ♦ **"Das Rheingold,"** with Ms. Radvanovsky, Ms. Palmer, Birgitta Svendén, Philip Langridge, Graham Clark, James Morris, and Richard Paul Fink; Mr. Levine. (April 24 at 8.) ♦ With Dennis Petersen instead of Mr. Clark and Mr. Wlaschiha instead of Mr. Fink. (May 1 at 8.) ♦ **"Die Walküre,"** with Ms. Eaglen, Deborah Voigt, Ms. Palmer, Mr. Domingo, Mr. Morris, and Kristinn Sigmundsson; Mr. Levine. (April 25 and May 2 at 6.) ♦ **"Siegfried,"** with Ms. Eaglen, Ms. Svendén, Mr. Neumann, Mr. Clark, Mr. Morris, and Mr. Wlaschiha; Mr. Levine. (April 27 at 6.) ♦ **"Giulio Cesare,"** by Handel, with Hei-Kyung Hong, Jennifer Larmore, Stephanie Blythe, David Daniels, and Brian Asawa; John Nelson. (April 28 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)
NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Final performances of the season. April 20 at 7:30 and April 22 at 8: Rameau's *comédie lyrique*

"Platée," in a production directed and choreographed by Mark Morris. The cast includes sopranos Christine Brandes and Amy Burton and tenor Jean-Paul Fouchécourt. ♦ April 21 at 8 and April 23 at 1:30: "Carmen." ♦ April 22 at 1:30: "Tosca." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC OPERA THEATRE
Presenting Cimarosa's 1792 comic opera "Il Matrimonio Segreto," fully staged, in Italian (with English supertitles). (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. April 26 and April 28 at 8 and April 30 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
April 25 at 8: The orchestra makes a rare visit to its old home a few blocks south of Lincoln Center to perform Sofia Gubaidulina's "Two Paths: Music for Two Violas" and Mahler's Symphony No. 1. Kurt Masur conducts, and the ensemble's two ranking violists—principal Cynthia Phelps and associate principal Rebecca Young—appear as the soloists. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.) ♦ April 27, April 29, and May 1 at 8 and April 28 at 11 A.M.: The orchestra moves back to its accustomed stage to perform Hindemith's "Nobilissima Visione," the "Good Friday Music" from Wagner's "Parsifal," and Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (the "Jupiter") with Daniele Gatti conducting. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030.)

NEW ENGLAND BACH FESTIVAL
Blanche Moyse directs the festival's orchestra and children's choir and the Blanche Honegger Moyse Chorale in Bach's "St. Matthew Passion," with Jon Humphrey (tenor, as the Evangelist), bass-baritone John Shirley-Quirk (as Jesus), and soloists Hyunah Yu (soprano), Mary Westbrook-Geha (mezzo-soprano), Frederick Urrey (tenor), Sanford Sylvan (baritone), and David Ripley (bass-baritone). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 23 at 7.)

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
At Carnegie Hall, Christoph von Dohnányi conducting. April 27 at 8: Bartók's "Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta" and Beethoven's Symphony No. 3. ♦ April 28 at 8: Ives's Symphony No. 4 (with the Dessoff Choirs), John Adams's "Century Rolls" (featuring pianist Emanuel Ax), and Varèse's "Amériques" (in its revised version, from 1927, for only a hundred and twenty-five instruments—a reduction of fifteen players from the composer's original conception). (247-7800.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Seiji Ozawa conducts Messiaen's immense, ten-movement "Turangalîla-symphonie," with Pierre-Laurent Aimard as the piano soloist and Takashi Harada playing the *ondes martenot* obbligato. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 29 at 8.)

GABRIELI CONSORT
Paul McCreesh leads the English early-music vocal ensemble in two sombre works by the Spanish Renaissance composer Cristóbal de Morales: his "Officium Defunctorum" and his "Missa pro Defunctis" (composed in 1544). (Christ Church and Holy Family, 320 Clinton St., Brooklyn. April 30 at 3. For information about tickets, call 800-627-0655.)

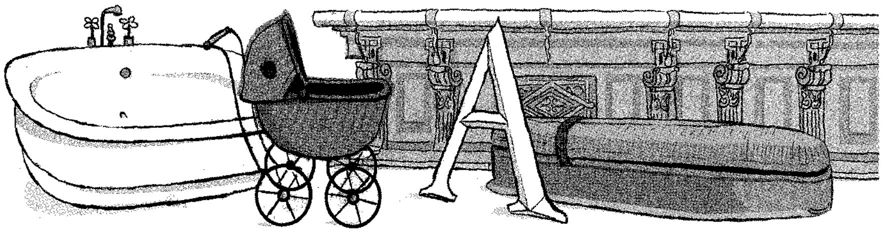
PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Wolfgang Sawallisch conducts Barber's Violin Concerto (featuring Frank Peter Zimmermann), in addition to two Finnish symphonies: Einojuhani Rautavaara's Eighth and Sibelius's Seventh. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 1 at 8.)

RECITALS

MY LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S CONSORT
The early-music group presents Elizabethan lute songs, madrigals, instrumental dances, and poetry readings. (Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290. April 22 at 1 and 3.)

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Thinking Big



Despite their minuscule dwellings, New Yorkers exhibit a surprising penchant for fixtures and furnishings so imposing they might have been wrenched from the great hall at San Simeon. It's easy enough to make a home for a flea-market vase or a thrift-shop painting, but it takes courage to adopt Victorian bar backs and stained-glass transoms.

URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY (143 Franklin St.; 431-4646), located just down the block from the Franklin Street subway station, is typical of the city's salvage houses, with an inventory culled from demolished hotels, abandoned churches, renovated train depots, and other vanished parts of the city's past. The ever-shifting stock includes a nineteen-twenties metal dental cabinet with stubby cabriole legs ($1,800 as is; $4,500 restored) and a fancy maroon-and-ivory scale reading "How Much Do You Weigh?" ($2,500) which might have served time in a Depression-era malt shop. A gargantuan oval bathtub with brass hardware and three enamel knobs ("hot," "cold," and the unprepossessing "waste") is $25,000 and just crying out for a Martini on a tray and a stack of paperbacks; a charming if dilapidated wicker doll carriage, which probably hasn't seen an occupant since 1920, is a more manageable $175.

Vintage Automat machines have pride of place at **BARS AND BARBACKS OF NEW YORK** (49 E. Houston St.; 431-0600), where the enthusiastic proprietor offers to restore a four-window specimen ($5,000) so that the turntable spins once again. If an old food dispenser lacks a certain drama, the shop has a spectacularly expensive, elaborately carved hundred-and-thirty-year-old bar that is sixty feet long, decorated with veined green onyx and gargoyles, and hails from Flussel's, a College Point, Queens, watering hole that was popular when that area was something of a nineteenth-century Hamptons ($95,000).

Across the street, at **MANHATTAN CASTLES AND PROPS** (76 E. Houston St.; 505-8699), merchandise piles up on the sidewalk on sunny afternoons: a nineteenth-century rattan coffin ($850) shares the curb with a trio of illuminated aluminum stars, the biggest nearly four feet tall, rescued from Warner Bros.' back lot ($1,250). Once lit (regular bulbs are fine), the stars could turn a nondescript studio apartment into a dressing room worthy of Billie Burke.

The lighting is a sight more dignified at **REMAINS** (19 W. 24th St., second floor; 675-8051), where the owners have laid in a serious store of cast-opaline-glass hanging fixtures—the shop calls them "inverted dome chandeliers"—that once brightened the drawing rooms of Edwardian burghers, including an exquisitely etched pair that sway ethereally from silver-plated bronze chains ($6,000). For a thousand dollars less, the store will sell you a set of cartoonishly huge forest-green lanterns that used to guard the exterior of an insurance company in Springfield, Massachusetts.

While there isn't a pair of forest-green insurance-company lanterns at **IRREPLACEABLE ARTIFACTS** (14 Second Ave.; 777-2900), there's virtually everything else: seven tenement floors crammed with friezes and fountains and flagpoles. One dark chamber is lined with twelve old bathtubs, as dignified as sarcophagi; another offers a seemingly endless supply of fireplace surrounds, including a simple marble mantel decorated with a cameo urn and two medallions ($5,500). A creaky metal door leads to the roof, where century-old stone seraphim cast a cold eye on the rough streets below, dreaming of whatever strange fate awaits them next.

—*Lynn Yaeger*

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

BRAZILIAN GUITAR QUARTET
The star guitarist Paul Galbraith, a British expat in São Paulo, heads this ensemble in a program that includes arrangements of music by Bach, Villa-Lobos, and the Brazilian composers Antonio Carlos Gomes and Camargo Mozart Guarneri. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. April 22 at 8.)

NICHOLAS DANIEL
Oboist, performing sonatas by Bach and Saint-Saëns, in addition to pieces by Britten, Elgar, and others, with pianist Julius Drake assisting. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. April 23 at 5.)

ALFRED BRENDEL
The pianist performs sonatas by masters of Viennese Classicism: Haydn (in E-Flat Major, Hob. XVI:49), Mozart (in B-Flat Major, K. 333), and Schubert (in A Minor, D. 845). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 24 at 7:30.)

JAMES DAVID CHRISTIE
The organist performs Bach's "The Art of Fugue" on the twenty-one-stop chamber organ installed in the gallery of St. Thomas Church. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. April 25 at 8. For information about tickets, call 717-9246.)

MAUREEN O'FLYNN
In her New York début recital, the soprano performs songs by Bellini, Debussy, Liszt, and others, assisted by pianist William Lewis. (Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 25 at 8.)

"PIANO CENTURY"
The Juilliard School's remarkable season-long survey of twentieth-century piano music comes to a close with performances of works from the nineteen-nineties, by a dozen composers (including Lois V Vierk, Elliott Carter, Ralph Shapey, and Thomas Adès). (Paul Hall, Juilliard School, Lincoln Center. April 25 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

JOHN TAVENER
The English mystical composer discusses his music, and soprano Lucy Shelton and cellist Fred Sherry perform selections of his music. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. April 27 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

NEW MUSIC FOR A NEW CENTURY
Jeffrey Milarsky conducts the ensemble in new works by Miyuki Ito, Jason Roth, Jason Royal, and Carl Voss. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 27 at 8.)

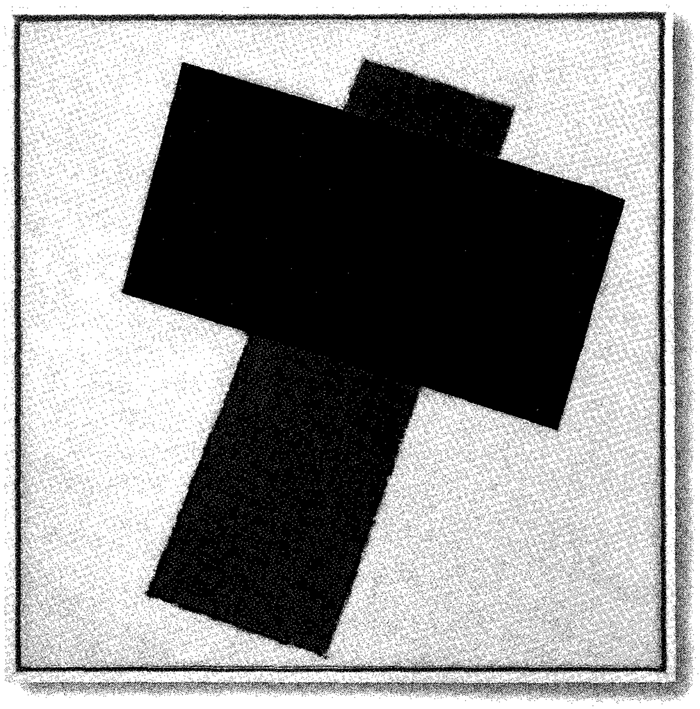
SEQUITUR
The modern-music ensemble performs before-and-after works by two composers whose styles evolved from serialism into a sort of neo-Romanticism: David Del Tredici (his "Night-Conjure Verse," from 1965, and the première of a new song cycle, "Miz Inez Sez") and George Rochberg (his "Serenata d'Estate," from 1955, and his String Quartet No. 4, from two decades later). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. April 28 at 8.)

CHRISTIAN TETZLAFF
At Alice Tully Hall, playing Bach's works for unaccompanied violin. April 29 at 5: The Sonatas No. 1 and No. 2 and the Partita No. 1. ♦ At 8: The Partitas No. 2 and No. 3 and the Sonata No. 3. (875-5050.)

HAGEN STRING QUARTET
The foursome plays Beethoven's Quartet in B-Flat Major (Op. 130) and Schubert's Quartet in G Major (D. 887). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. April 29 at 8.)

YEFIM BRONFMAN
The pianist offers Beethoven's G-Major Fantasia and his Sonatas in E-Flat Major (Op. 27, No. 1) and F Minor (Op. 57, the "Appassionata"). Completing the program are Berg's Piano Sonata and his "Seven Early Songs" (with soprano Christine Brewer). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. April 30 at 2.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLE
Members of the orchestra, plus several guests, perform Mozart's G-Minor Piano Quartet, Copland's "Threnodies I and II" (for flute and strings), string-quartet arrangements of songs by Jerome Kern, Zygmunt Krauze's Piano Quintet, and Shostakovich's E-Minor Piano Trio. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 30 at 3.)



Kazimir Malevich, ***Suprematist Composition***, circa 1919-1920
oil on canvas, 31 5/8 x 31 5/8 in. (80.3 x 80.3 cm)
contact: Howard Rutkowski t. 212.570.4830 f. 212.570.2207 hrutkowski@phillipsny.com

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AUCTIONEERS

Points of view

THE SHORES OF HONOLULU
AS SEEN FROM THE ORCHID POOL

Today I swam in a work of art.
And was greeted poolside with the sunscreen
I requested on my last visit...
they remembered.
I have found perfection
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DAWN UPSHAW
The soprano performs French art songs, with pianist Jérôme Ducros assisting. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. April 30 at 5.)

SONGS BY JAKE HEGGIE
Following almost two decades as a hardworking musician (including a decade touring as a duo pianist with Johana Harris, widow of composer Roy Harris), Jake Heggie has suddenly become an "overnight success." As a member of the public-relations staff at San Francisco Opera, he became acquainted with the country's finest singers, and many of them have begun to champion his compositions. More high-profile attention lies on the horizon: next October, San Francisco Opera will première his new opera, "Dead Man Walking," based on the book by Sister Helen Préjean which gained fame through a film adaptation. In this concert, mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade sings his cycle "Songs to the Moon"; the concert also includes performances by sopranos Kristin Clayton, Nicolle Foland, and Zheng Cao, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore, and countertenor Brian Asawa. Presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. May 1 at 8.)

SYLVAN WINDS
Pianist Christine Dahl joins the wind players for Roussel's Divertissement, Martinů's Sextet, Katherine Hoover's "Homage to Bartók," and Joseph Jongen's Rhapsody (Op. 70). (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 1 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"VB42 INTREPID"
Performance artist Vanessa Beecroft presents her latest work, which features thirty sailors from the United States Navy's Undersea Warfare Community in formation on the flight deck of the Intrepid Sea Air Space Museum. (Pier 86, Twelfth Ave. at 46th St. For more information, call the Public Art Fund, at 980-3942. April 21, from 7:30 to 9.)

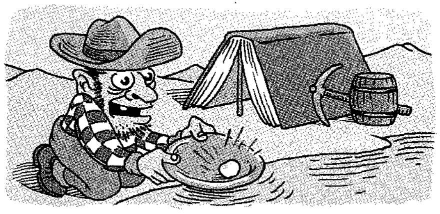
POPULAR UPRISING
Last summer Chris Doyle, an artist whose previous work has included gilding the steps to the Williamsburg Bridge, travelled to the ends of each of the subway lines that pass through Columbus Circle, looking for people he could film jumping up in the air. He slowed the images a bit, blew them up, edited out the landings, and is now projecting them onto the smooth white stone façade of 2 Columbus Circle. Before the twenty-foot-tall figures rise into the night sky, they each take a few seconds of self-conscious preparation—tucking in their shirts, stretching out their arms, bending their knees—and then, abandoning those careful efforts, throw all of their energy into reaching the highest point possible. "This project is a way of lionizing the people who make New York happen," Doyle says. (April 27-30, from dusk to 10. For more information, call Creative Time, at 206-6674, ext. 263.)

READINGS
April 19 at 8: By Jonathan Galassi, Mark Bibbins, and Mary Ruefle, from their poetry. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) ♦ April 24 at 7:30: By Robert Polito, William Wadsworth, Vickie Karp, and others, from their contributions to the recently published anthology "The KGB Bar Book of Poems." (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ April 29 at 6: By poets Eavan Boland, Donald Platt, and Sharon Dolin. (Center for Book Arts, 28 W. 27th St., third floor. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
April 25 at 6: New York *Times* writer Sam Roberts talks with former Brooklyn Academy of Music impresario Harvey Lichtenstein about the future of New York City. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 930-0571.) ♦ April 30 at 7:30: *Business Week* editor Stephen Shepard discusses the computer industry with Carleton Fiorina, C.E.O. of Hewlett Packard. (Caspary Auditorium, Rockefeller University, York Ave. at 66th St. 996-1100.)

BOOK CURRENTS

There's Gold in Them Thar Books!



TONY MILLIONAIRE

The Greek poet Archilochus wrote, in the seventh century B.C., "I do not care for the wealth of Gyges rich in gold / Envy has never taken hold of me." Archilochus was an exception; the lust for loot has seized men and women for centuries. In **GOLD: THE CALIFORNIA STORY** (California), Mary Hill writes that well before 1848—when James Marshall unearthed a pea-size golden nugget near Sutter's sawmill and began the California gold rush—sixteenth-century rumors of golden cities spurred Spanish expeditions to land north of Mexico. Hill also notes that as early as 1510, the Spanish adventure-fiction writer Garci Ordoñez de Montalvo wrote of an "island called California" which was home to women known as Amazons, who had arms and armor of solid gold.

Despite Marshall's fortuitous find, his luck was short-lived, and he died penniless. This fate was not uncommon among early prospectors. In a letter collected in William Benemann's **A YEAR OF MUD AND GOLD: SAN FRANCISCO IN LETTERS AND DIARIES** (Nebraska), a forty-niner writes home, "I had but a little over a hundred dollars when I arrived here and a considerable part of that is gone already." Another miner was less concerned with finance: "Cooked some fritters for the first time. A man shot himself."

Men were not the only ones in search of precious ore—or capable of desperate acts—in the Wild West. A portrait of Eleanora Dumont, a card shark who ran a gambling den in Nevada City and refused booze to losers ("Any man silly enough to lose his last cent to a woman deserved a milk diet"), appears in **WITH GREAT HOPE: WOMEN OF THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH** (Falcon), by JoAnn Chartier and Chris Enss. Also noted are Ellen Clark Sargent, a "gracious rebel," and Emma Nevada, a "diva of the diggins."

—*Nicole LaPorte*

Books.
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LAURA ZIGMAN

DATING BIG BIRD

by Laura Zigman

The bestselling author of *Animal Husbandry* takes a wry look at some of the real issues facing career women through the eyes of a thirtysomething Manhattanite. When Ellen's focus begins to shift from business world to biological clock, she is faced with the dilemmas of a dead-end relationship, single parenthood and finding a partner. (The Dial Press)

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IN THE FALL

by Jeffrey Lent

In this bold debut, the singular legacy of an American family begins with the union of a Vermont soldier and a runaway slave girl. The consequences of their forbidden love sets off an amazing drama of hidden secrets and heartrending tragedy that continues through the Great Depression. (Atlantic Monthly Press)

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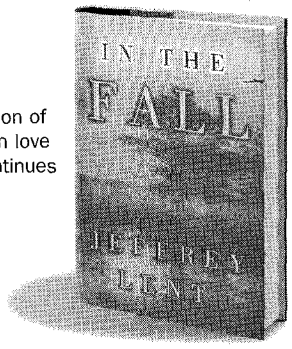

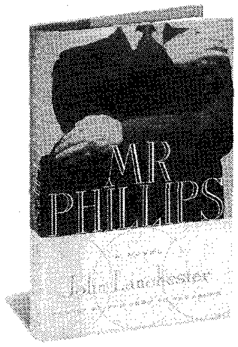

MR PHILLIPS

by John Lanchester

The award-winning author of *The Debt to Pleasure* presents another deeply penetrating novel with *Mr Phillips*, the tale of a decent fellow who loses his job and, unable to tell his wife, wanders the streets of London reminiscing about an ordinary life thrown into sudden disarray. (Putnam)

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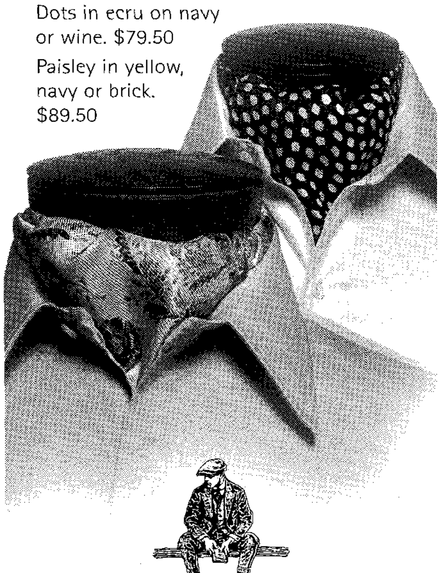

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MOVIES OPENING

THE BIG KAHUNA
A comedy with Kevin Spacey, Danny DeVito, and Peter Facinelli, who play salesmen competing to land a major client. Opening April 28.

COMMITTED
Heather Graham drives from New York City to rural Texas in search of her wayward husband, in this romantic adventure. Opening April 28.

CROUPIER
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening April 21.

DON'T LET ME DIE ON A SUNDAY
A young raver (Elodie Bouchez) returns from the dead after a morgue attendant resuscitates her, in this sexual psychodrama directed by Didier Le Pecheur. In French. Opening April 21. (Quad Cinema.)

THE FLINTSTONES IN VIVA ROCK VEGAS
A live-action prequel to "The Flintstones," which tells of the courtship of Fred and Wilma. Directed by Brian Levant. Opening April 28.

FREQUENCY
A mysterious sunspot phenomenon allows a man to communicate with his murdered father (Dennis Quaid) via ham radio. Directed by Gregory Hoblit. Opening April 28.

FROM THE EDGE OF THE CITY
Constantine Giannaris's drama about young street hustlers in Athens. In Greek. Opening April 21. (The Screening Room.)

GOSSIP
A date-rape rumor that begins as a college prank spirals out of control. With Kate Hudson and Joshua Jackson. Opening April 21.

THE IDIOTS
A Dogma film directed by Lars Von Trier, about a group of eccentrics who affect spastic behavior in public. In Danish. Opening April 28.

THE LAST SEPTEMBER
Deborah Warner makes her film directorial début with this historical drama set in the nineteen-twenties, about the end of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. Adapted by John Banville from the Elizabeth Bowen novel. Opening April 21.

LOVE AND BASKETBALL
Two basketball players, one male (Omar Epps) and one female (Sanaa Lathan), pursue their hoop dreams, and each other. Opening April 21.

TIME CODE
Mike Figgis's new film, shot entirely with hand-held digital cameras, presents four interweaving stories simultaneously, with the screen split into quadrants. Opening April 28.

U-571
A U.S. submarine crew attempts to steal the Enigma code from a sinking German U-boat, in this action thriller directed by Jonathan Mostow. With Matthew McConaughey, Harvey Keitel, and Jon Bon Jovi. Opening April 21.

THE VIRGIN SUICIDES
Sofia Coppola's adaptation of Jeffrey Eugenides's novel is a dark comedy about a Midwestern family with five suicidal daughters. Opening April 21.

WHERE THE HEART IS
Natalie Portman plays a teen-age girl who becomes a celebrity after she gives birth in a Wal-Mart. Directed by Matt Williams. Opening April 28.

FILM NOTES

If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.

AMERICAN PSYCHO
Bret Easton Ellis's infamous novel, a wicked distillation of the nineteen-eighties, has finally made it to the screen; that audiences should laugh so freely at the result is an equally telling footnote to our own times. Christian Bale plays Patrick Bateman—serial killer, Wall Street whiz, and a snob so gripped by status symbols that he hyperventilates at the sight of a business card more finely printed than his own. The director, Mary Harron, shows us little of Bateman's office life, and we need more; it's a question not just of period detail but of the vital bond between his night work and his day job—between the dismemberment of corpses and the dismantling of corporations. Yet there is much to dazzle and distress here: Harron lights and arranges her characters—especially Bateman's friends—like gleaming humanoids, as if he is not alone in yielding to forces far more potent than himself. Bale is smooth and sinister; the actresses around him—Chloë Sevigny, Cara Seymour, and Samantha Mathis—seem pale and defeated by comparison, as if they know themselves to be doomed. Apart from a spree with a chainsaw, the violence of the book has been sharply toned down, (you could hardly tone it up), and some of the killing has turned into cold, outrageous comedy, with Bateman explaining his penchant for Whitney Houston and Genesis to bemused victims. With a record collection like that, he was lucky not to get it in the neck himself.—*Anthony Lane* (4/17/00) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

BARRY LYNDON
Thackeray wrote a skittish, fast-moving parody of romantic, sentimental writing. It was about the adventures of an Irish knave who used British hypocrisy for leverage. However, it must have been Barry's ruthless pursuit of wealth and social position rather than his spirit that attracted Stanley Kubrick. His images are fastidiously delicate in the inexpressive, peculiarly chilly manner of the English painters of the period—the mid-eighteenth century—and it's an ice pack of a movie, a masterpiece in every insignificant detail. Kubrick suppresses most of the active elements that make movies pleasurable. The film says that people are disgusting but things are lovely. And a narrator (Michael Hordern) tells you what's going to happen before you see it. It's a coffee-table movie; the stately tour of European high life is like a three-hour slide show for art-history majors. Released in 1975.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; April 21-27.)

BLACK AND WHITE
James Toback's dangerous comedy is by turns malicious and earnest as it explores relations between whites and blacks in New York's hip-hop community. Oli (Power) Grant plays a thuggish rap entrepreneur at the center of a group that includes a snarly upper-class teen-age girl (Bijou Phillips), a pathetic hanger-on (William Lee Scott), and a married couple in which the husband (Robert Downey, Jr.) is gay and the wife (Brooke Shields) is an earnest bumbler with a video camera. Toback shows interactions between the races as charged but fragmentary, and the gliding camera (David Ferrara did the cinematography) captures the momentary connections. Toback gets at the way certain whites long for danger and excitement, and how blacks who want to leave the ghetto yet remain authentic pop-culture outlaws need whites as an audience. There is much that is inept and clunky here, but at

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its best the movie has the caught-on-the-run quality of some of Godard's pictures from thirty-five years ago. With Mike Tyson, Knicks star Allan Houston, supermodel Claudia Schiffer, and, as a tormented New York cop, Ben Stiller. Music by Wu-Tang Clan and many others, including Dimitri Shostakovich.—*David Denby* (4/10/00) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

CROUPIER

A slight and streamlined bauble from British director Mike Hodges (who did "Get Carter"), about a writer (played to stony perfection by Clive Owen) who takes a job as a roulette dealer, aiming, in the process, to write a best-seller about his experiences. The plot revolves around the big chance he takes when he rescues a mysterious woman (Alex Kingston of "ER") from a life-threatening gambling debt. The lean and twisted screenplay—nobody is what they seem—gives Hodges ample time to play with doppelgängers, duplicity, and lots of mirrors. The sombre turns of the story and low-key performances are a welcome reminder that taut moviemaking (where violence erupts unchoreographed) can be as exciting as fast-paced editing and scorching pyrotechnics.—*Bruce Diones* (State.)

EAST IS EAST

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ERIN BROCKOVICH

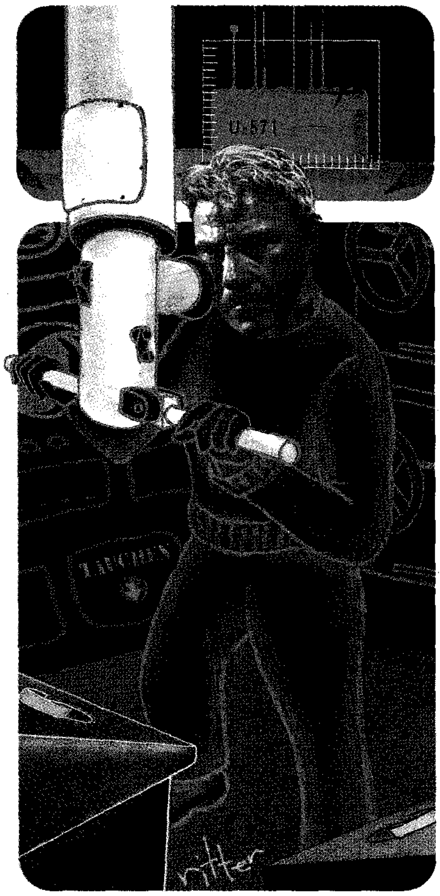
This upbeat, inspirational melodrama, based on a true story and directed by Steven Soderbergh, is brought to life by a star on a heavenly rampage. Julia Roberts swings into rooms, ablaze with indignation, her breasts bulging out of her skimpy tops, and rants at the people gaping at her. She's a moral heroine with no sense of propriety—Ralph Nader crossed with Jesse Ventura. Like "A Civil Action" and "The Insider," the movie exposes corporate malfeasance—in this case, that of Pacific Gas & Electric, which for years dumped a lethal chemical called chromium 6 at its plant in Hinkley, California; the families who lived nearby were diagnosed with multiple cancers. Brockovich, a legal secretary without formal training, leads the charge against the utility corporation, supported by a phlegmatic middle-aged lawyer (Albert Finney) and by her lover (Aaron Eckhart), a hippie-biker dreamboat, bearded but beerless, who takes care of Erin's children while she's out haranguing everybody. Soderbergh's direction goes straight as an arrow, and the movie, though obvious, crude, and even bullying, is raffishly enjoyable and touching.—*D.D.* (3/27/00) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE FILTH AND THE FURY

A new documentary about the Sex Pistols by Julien Temple, who has already made "The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle." Whether or not the band is an inexhaustible topic remains open to debate. The sight of a sullen and raw-skinned Sid Vicious sitting on a park bench and explaining how good-looking he is will not, perhaps, bear repeated viewings. The film wants Britain to be as reckless and unpredictable as its subject, but this requires a little twisting of the evidence: Britain in the mid-nineteen-seventies was bored and bungling, and, despite what Temple's riotous montage of unrest might suggest, the place was never on the verge of revolution—nothing beyond the musical, at any rate. The surviving band members (including lead singer Johnny Rotten) are filmed in silhouette, as if they were ex-criminals in the Witness Protection Program; this is known as flattery. Still, it is always diverting to watch harmlessly horrible people taking out their frustrations on one another—especially when the mask slips and they temporarily forget to be horrible. The climax of the picture is all anticlimax. Uprooted from home territory, the Sex Pistols withered in the alien soil of America. Their antics have aged badly; how odd, then, that their fistful of hits sound more essential and purgative than ever.—*A.L.* (4/3/00) (Film Forum.)

FINAL DESTINATION

Two alumni of "The X-Files," writer Glen Morgan and director James Wong, make the leap to the big screen and come up with one of the most enjoyable scarefests in years. While boarding an airplane, a high-school student (Devon Sawa) has a premonition that the plane will crash—a hunch later proved explosively correct. He saves the lives of a group of fellow-students, but death won't be cheated, and supernatural forces begin to menace the survivors, one by one. Wong bathes each scene with deep shadows, and the creepy lighting gives the picture a ghastly, nightmarish feel. The "Omen"-like setup (a grisly death every fifteen minutes or so) rolls along like a fun-house ride, and the deaths themselves are designed with the fabulous complexity of Rube Goldberg contraptions. The film is clever enough not to get caught in its own mousetrap; there's a gleeful spirit to the frights delivered here, and the kicker of an ending leaves the audience with a perfect final scream.—*B.D.* (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, and Union Square.)



Opening April 21, "U-571," a submarine thriller set during the Second World War.

HIGH FIDELITY

A short, sharp movie from Stephen Frears, who may be trying to shake himself awake after the languors of his last film, "The Hi-Lo Country." The source is Nick Hornby's buoyant novel, which was set in North London, but the shift to Chicago feels easy, perhaps because difficulties with girls and a penchant for listing favorite pop songs are universal symptoms of male haplessness. John Cusack stars as Rob, who runs a ratty record store called Championship Vinyl; if anything, the records are more tightly packed in his apartment, which may be why his girlfriend Laura (Iben Hjejle) has just moved out. For most of the picture, they duck and weave, unable to decide whether to stay together; not much happens, and, like Laura, you want things to move on. Yet Frears keeps jump-starting the action with fast cuts, flashbacks, and a jolting current of loud music. (The end credits, which roll to a Stevie Wonder song, send you out on a high.) Why Frears made the film so dark and rain-drenched is something of a mystery; perhaps he was seeking a visual match for the glumness of perpetual adolescence. No love, the film ruefully suggests, will ever be as much fun as a good love song. Fortunately, Cusack and the rest of the cast—notably Jack Black, as a noxious compound of slob and snob—insist, like all good discophiles, on hearing both sides.—*A.L.* (4/3/00) (Cinema I, Criterion Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

JOE GOULD'S SECRET

The great Ian Holm, rampaging and melancholy, plays Joe Gould, the Greenwich Village bohemian, genius, drunkard, bum, and faker whom the reporter Joseph Mitchell immortalized in two pieces written for this magazine. As Gould, Holm darts around the Village streets and bars like a water bug, displaying the largest vocal and temperamental range of his career so far. As Mitchell, Stanley Tucci, who also directed, is a proper and gracious Southern gentleman both drawn to and exasperated by the wild Gould, who claims to have written an enormous underground history of New York City. Tucci re-creates an older, more generous New York, as mellow as amber, but the heart of the picture is Gould's mysterious hold on Mitchell. Tucci, taking off from a suggestion of Mitchell's, implies that Gould's entertaining shenanigans and spectacular, self-chosen failure may have caused Mitchell to despair of his own writing. In the end, the movie sentimentalizes a baffling, even sinister, ethos of silence. Adapted by Howard A. Rodman.—*D.D.* (4/10/00) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

JOHN HUSTON WAR STORIES

A profound and potent combination of compendium and memoir. The filmmaker, Midge Mackenzie, and her cameraman, Richard Leacock, intersperse pieces of John Huston's soul-stirring Second World War documentaries with segments of an interview they conducted with Huston at his Puerto Vallarta home in 1982. The majesty of the subject matter humanizes Huston; here, this larger-than-life figure seems life-size. When he admits that he succumbed to propaganda in parts of "Report from the Aleutians," or describes moments cut from "The Battle of San Pietro" which even he found too emotional or brutal, Huston's testimony has the piercing honesty of that great scene in "The Straight Story" when two old vets in a bar confess combat nightmares. The result is an informal yet eloquent essay on the ravages of war which also salutes Huston's courage and his rarely erring instinct as a director: when describing how he approached "Let There Be Light," his intimate record of veterans treated for psychological wounds at a Long Island hospital, he says, "I didn't impose anything . . . the stories were sufficient."—*Michael Sragow.* (Museum of Modern Art; April 20-22.)

KEEPING THE FAITH

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

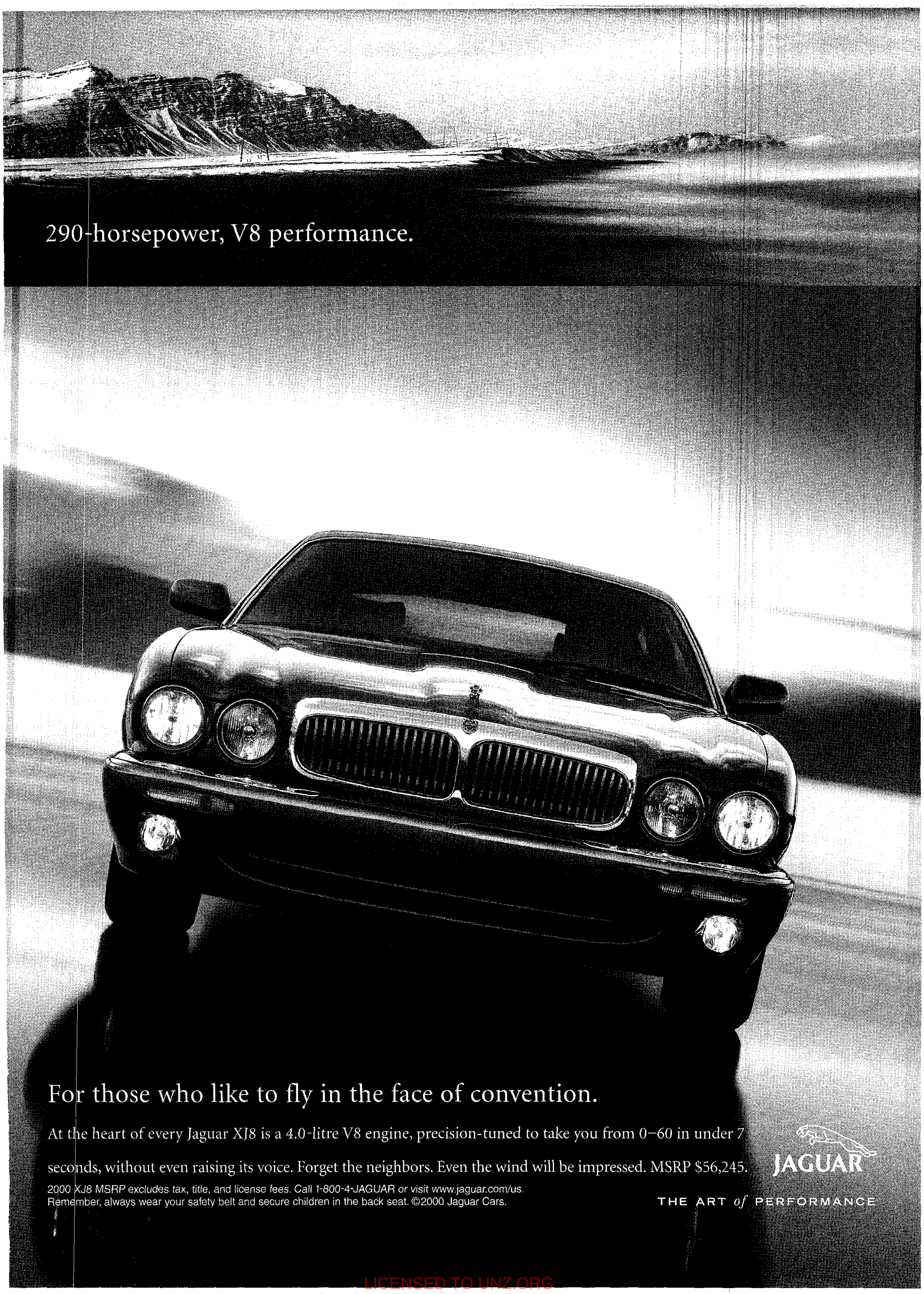
MANTRAP

For this exuberant 1926 sex farce, an obscure Sinclair Lewis novel provides the tinder, and the director, Victor Fleming, and his star (and lover), Clara Bow, provide the sparks. What ensues is a classic comic conflagration about a Minneapolis manicurist (Bow) who marries a general-store owner from Mantrap, Canada (Ernest Torrence), but finds backwoods matrimony boring. She throws herself at a vacationing divorce lawyer from Manhattan (Percy Marmont), whose city-bred sexual disgust evaporates in the bracing wilderness—and in Bow's magnetic force field. Like no one else, Fleming knew how to use Bow's negative and positive charges to energize an entire movie. She doesn't just have come-hither eyes: she has a come-hither face and body, too. With photography by James Wong Howe, the film has its own dazzling seductions as moviemaking: in the rugged San Bernardino Mountain locations, the robust camerawork and staging make viewers feel as if they, too, are breathing heady gusts of fresh forest air.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; May 1.)

RETURN TO ME

A well-intentioned dud, smoothly directed by Bonnie Hunt, about a widower (David Duchovny) who falls in love with a waitress (Minnie Driver) who just happens to be the recipient of his dead wife's heart.

JOHN RITTER

290-horsepower, V8 performance.

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JAGUAR

THE ART *of* PERFORMANCE

This is a rather shaky setup for a light romantic comedy, and the sentimental hokum ladled over every scene doesn't help. The cast of characters includes a group of lovable old codgers (Robert Loggia and Carroll O'Connor among them) who run an Italian restaurant with an Irish name, an endearing best friend (Hunt), her big lug of a husband (James Belushi), and a dog who waits faithfully by the door for his master to get home. There's no tension in the story—it's a given from the start that these two lovebirds will fall madly for each other. The actors do a decent job of making all the cuteness tolerable, but a movie that is begging to be loved loses charm quickly.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

ROMEO MUST DIE

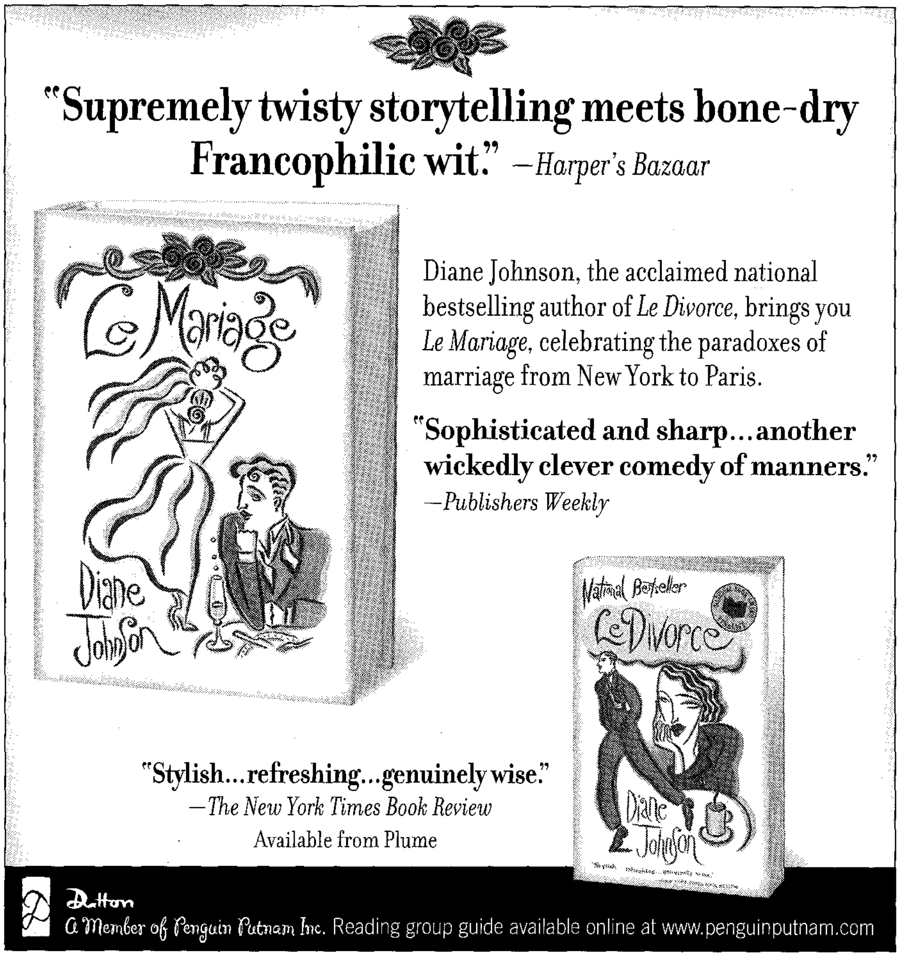
Thankfully, we are spared the spectacle of Jet Li whispering sonnets in the moonlight; this film goes nowhere near Shakespeare. It's a slick package of rap music and roundhouse kicks designed to establish Li, already a Hong Kong box-office phenomenon, as the Fred Astaire of fisticuffs. Adhering to a time-honored kung-fu-film tradition, the earnest dialogue and overloaded plot serve only as filler to be endured before the next fight sequence begins. (If you must know: the plot involves two gangs, one Asian, one black, who duke it out on the Oakland waterfront.) Li is a graceful, smooth, and creative performer; a scene in which he destroys five prison guards while blindfolded and suspended by one leg is jaw-dropping. In another, he uses black plastic pull-ties to neutralize a troop of thugs—who knew that hardware stores provided such terrific weaponry? Director Andrzej Bartkowiak adds an inspired touch by showing each of Li's death blows as a slow-motion color X-ray; the anatomically curious can count each vertebra as it is broken in half.—*Michael Agger* (84th Street Sixplex, 59th Street East Cinema, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SKULLS

It's enough to make a conspiracy theorist weep: Skull and Bones, the storied secret society of the Yale élite, the collegiate haunt of future Presidents, C.I.A. spooks, and the occasional conservative sesquipedalian, has become fodder for a teen pic. Joshua Jackson, of "Dawson's Creek" fame, is Luke McNamara, a working-class senior at "Y" who has stroked the crew team to the Ivy championship for three years running. His ambition is to go to law school and do good, rather than become another big-firm flunky. When he's tapped by "the Skulls," he hopes his new blue-blooded friends will spot him the tuition, and soon enough he's chanting "A Skull above any other!" in a crypt airlifted from the Calvin Klein Home collection. Predictably, Jackson uncovers dark dealings, and must turn against his "soul mate" in the society, one Caleb Mandrake (who apparently descends from a long line of Waspy Wiccans). It's an unintentionally funny film. As the coup de grâce, the surprise hero is a slightly paunchy Southern politician who speaks with a dulcet, soothing voice that's awfully familiar.—*M.A.* (Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

THE SPECIALIST

The 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann, the fastidious, diminutive Nazi S.S. lieutenant who organized the transport of Jews to the death camps, was an international event, deliberately staged. The government of Israel transformed the main auditorium of the House of the People in Jerusalem into a courtroom and hired the American documentarian Leo T. Hurwitz to record the trial on videotape. For copyright reasons, this original footage moldered in obscurity for many years until an Israeli filmmaker, Eyal Sivan, restored and catalogued it. From more than five hundred hours of testimony, he and writer Rony Brauman restructured the trial proceedings so that the events follow the chronology of the war. The result is a concise portrait of Eichmann's career as it burgeoned alongside the increasing bureacratic demands of the Final Solution. You watch with mute horror as the prosecutors



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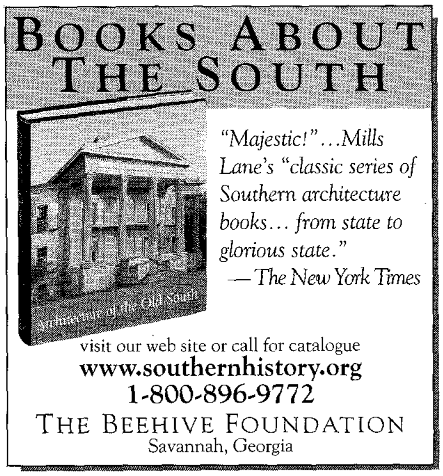

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and the judges repeatedly try to pry Eichmann out of euphemism, to have him admit, at last, that he knew what he was doing, that the "biological material" he "transmitted" met with something worse than simply a "special treatment." A harrowing feat of historical recovery.—*M.A.* (Film Forum.)

ALSO PLAYING

ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER (11/22/99)
Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
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East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, and Union Square.
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THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

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[illegible]aza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
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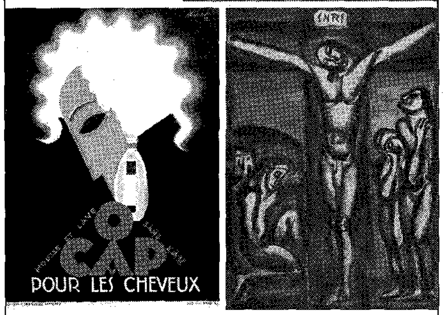

(left) Charles Loupot, "O Cap," Paris, 1928, May 8.
(right) Georges Rouault, "Miserere," complete portfolio with 58 aquatints, 1922-27, May 11.

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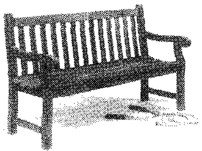

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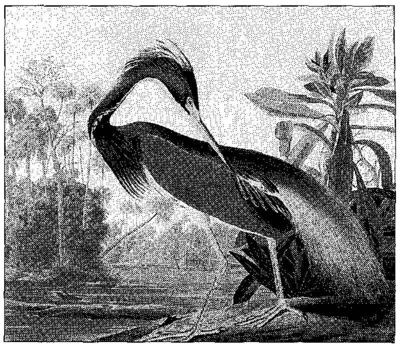

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62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
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Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
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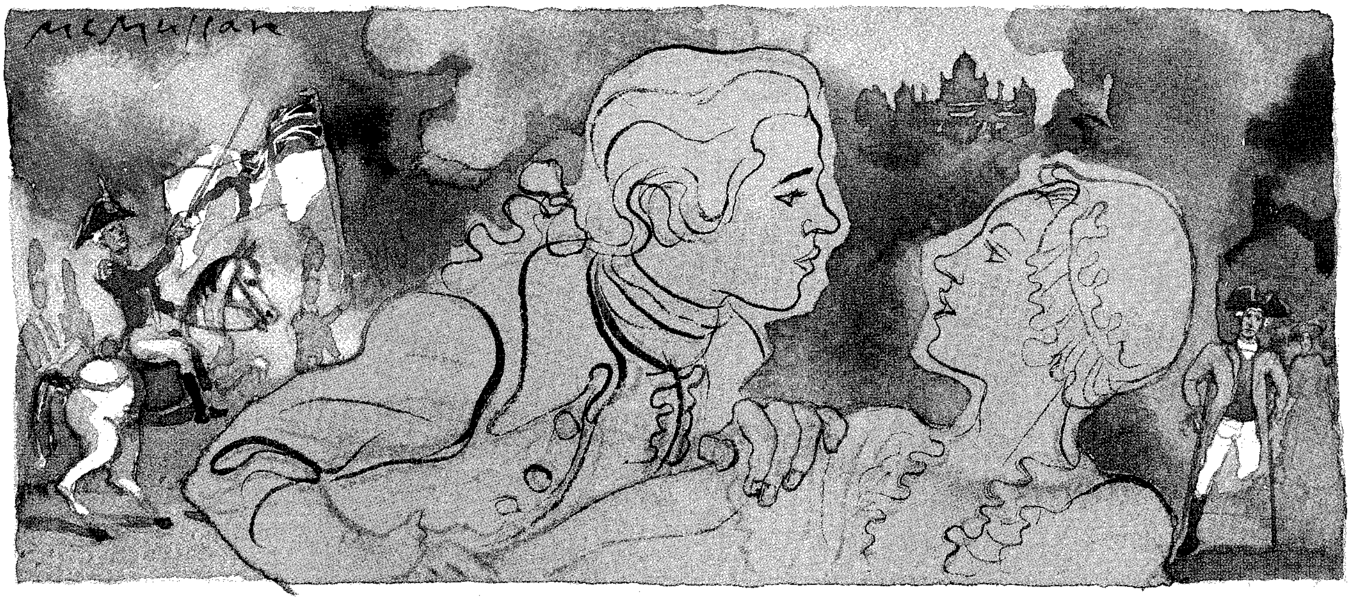


A new print of Stanley Kubrick's 1975 picture, "Barry Lyndon," opens a three-week retrospective of his work at Film Forum.

JAMES MCMULLAN

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Visions of Modernity: The Films of Fritz Lang." April 22 at 2: "The Big Heat" (1953). ♦ April 23 at 2: "The Woman in the Window" (1944). ♦ April 23 at 4: "Scarlet Street" (1945). ♦ April 29 at 2: "Rancho Notorious" (1951). ♦ April 29 at 4: "While the City Sleeps" (1955). ♦ April 30 at 2: "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt" (1956). ♦ April 30 at 4: "The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse" (1960; in German).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Restored prints of Fritz Lang's films. April 20 at 6: "The Wandering Image" (1920; with German intertitles). ♦ April 21 at 6: "Dr. Mabuse, Part I" (1922; with German intertitles). ♦ April 21 at 9: "Dr. Mabuse, Part II" (1922; with German intertitles). ♦ April 22 at 6: "The Tiger of Bengal" (1959) and "The Indian Tomb" (1959). ♦ April 28-29 at 6: "Contempt" (1963, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), which features Lang's only onscreen dramatic performance. ♦ Cinema from Greece and the Balkans. April 19 at 9: "The Travelling Players" (1975, Theo Angelopoulos; in Greek). ♦ April 20 at 11: "See You in Hell, My Darling" (1999, Nikos Nikoladis; in Greek). ♦ April 21 at 7: "The Lord's Lantern in Budapest" (1999, Miklós Janscó; in Hungarian). ♦ April 21 at 9: "He Who Must Die" (1957, Jules Dassin; in French and Greek). ♦ April 24 at 8: "PS2000 Short Film Festival."

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—All show times are at 4:30, 7, and 9:30 unless otherwise noted. April 19: "The Brandon Teena Story" (1998, Susan Muska and Greta Olafsdottir). ♦ April 20: "My Favorite Season" (1993, André Téchiné; in French). ♦ April 21: "Avalon" (1990, Barry Levinson). ♦ April 22-23: "Aguirre: The Wrath of God" (1972, Werner Herzog; in German). ♦ April 24: "Che Guevara: The Bolivian Diary" (1993, Richard Dindo). ♦ April 25: "Les Doulos" (1962, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French). ♦ April 26 at 8: "The Shakedown" (1929, William Wyler), with live piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin. ♦ April 27: "I Don't Kiss" (1991, Téchiné). ♦ April 28: "Strawberry and Chocolate" (1993, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea; in Spanish). ♦ April 29-30: "Wings of Hope" (1999, Herzog). ♦ May 1: "A Season in Paradise" (1996, Dindo). ♦ May 2: "Leon Morin Prêtre" (1961, Melville; in French).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A Stanley Kubrick retrospective. April 21-27 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Barry Lyndon" (†). ♦ April 28-29 at 1:30, 4:10, 6:50, and 9:30: "A Clockwork Orange" (1971). ♦ April 30 at 1, 4, 6:50, and 9:40: "Lolita" (1962). ♦ May 2 at 3, 6:25, and 9:50: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964). ♦ The films of Clara Bow. May 1 at 1, 4, 7, and 10: "Mantrap" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—April 20 at 6 and April 21-22 at 2: "John Huston War Stories" (†). ♦ A program of postwar Italian cinema. All films in Italian. April 27 at 6: "Scent of a Woman" (1964, Dino Risi), introduced by Vittorio Gassman. ♦ April 28 at 6 and April 30 at 2: "Crimen" (1960, Mario Camerini). ♦ April 28 at 8:15 and April 29 at 2: "The Rise of Louis XIV" (1966, Roberto Rossellini). ♦ May 1 at 2:30 and May 9 at 6: "Noi Tre" (1984, Pupi Avati). ♦ May 2 at 2 and 6: "Il Camorrista" (1986, Giuseppe Tornatore).

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Tuesdays through Sundays at 1 and Thursdays and Fridays at 7: Orson Welles's 1956 television pilot, "The Fountain of Youth." ♦ April 18-23 at 2, April 20 at 5:30, and April 21 at 6:30: A broadcast of a 1996 London revival of Stephen Sondheim's musical "Company."

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St., at Ave. A. (254-3300)—"The Lifestyle" (1999, David Schisgall).

THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—A James Bond marathon. April 29 at 12:30: "Dr. No" (1962, Terence Young). ♦ April 29 at 2:40: "From Russia With Love" (1963, Young). ♦ April 29 at 4:50: "Goldfinger" (1964, Guy Hamilton). ♦ April 29 at 7:05: "Thunderball" (1965, Young). ♦ April 29 at 9:40: "You Only Live Twice" (1967, Lewis Gilbert). ♦ April 29 at midnight: "Diamonds Are Forever" (1971, Hamilton). These films are also being shown at other times from April 28 through May 4.

SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway (864-1414)—April 25: "Pecker" (1998, John Waters). ♦ April 25 at 8:45: "Kika" (1993, Pedro Almodóvar).

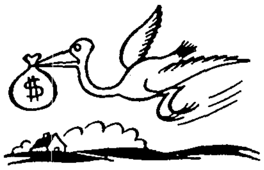
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through May 4: "Blame Canada!," classic and contemporary Canadian films. April 19 at 1 and 6:15: "The Grey Fox" (1982, Philip Borsos). ♦ April 19 at 3 and 8:15: "Calendar" (1993, Atom Egoyan). ♦ April 20 at 1 and 6: "Uncut" (1997, John Greyson). ♦ April 20 at 3 and 8: "J. A. Martin, Photographe" (1976, Jean Baudin; in French). ♦ April 21 at 1 and 6 and April 22 at 6:30: "Quand Je Serai Parti … Vous Vivrez Encore" (1999, Michel Brault; in French). ♦ April 21 at 3:30 and 8:30: "Pour la Suite du Monde" (1963, Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault; in French). ♦ April 22 at 4:15 and 9 and April 26 at 2:45: "Picture of Light" (1994, Peter Mettler and Andreas Zust). ♦ April 23 at 4:15 and April 26 at 1: "Just Watch Me: Trudeau and the 70s Generation" (1999, Catherine Annau; in French). ♦ April 23 at 6: "La Région Centrale" (1971, Michael Snow; in French). ♦ April 25 at 1 and 6:20: "Le Sexe des Étoiles" (1993, Paule Baillargeon; in French). ♦ April 25 at 8:15: "Cosmos" (1998, Denis Villeneuve and others). ♦ April 26 at 9: "Crash" (1997, David Cronenberg). ♦ April 28 at 1 and 6 and April 29 at 4:15: "La Demoiselle Sauvage" (1991, Léa Pool; in French). ♦ April 28 at 3:15 and 8:15 and April 29 at 6:15: "White Room" (1990, Patricia Rozema). ♦ April 29 at 8:30 and April 30 at 6:15: "Isabel" (1968, Paul Almond). ♦ April 30 at 4:15 and 8:30: "Twilight of the Ice Nymphs" (1997, Guy Maddin).

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Film and video selections from the 2000 Whitney Biennial. Highlights listed here. Tuesdays at noon: "Driver 23" (1998, Rolf Belgum). ♦ Wednesdays at 3: "Okay Bye-Bye" (1998, Rebecca Baron). ♦ Thursdays at 6:10: "Gummo" (1998, Harmony Korine). ♦ Fridays at noon: "Alma" (1998, Ruth Leitman). ♦ Saturdays at noon: "Spectres of the Spectrum" (1999, Craig Baldwin). ♦ Saturdays at 3: "Instrument" (1999, Jem Cohen with Fugazi). ♦ Sundays at 3: "Fast, Cheap, & Out of Control" (1997, Errol Morris).

THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
A GENERATION GLOATS

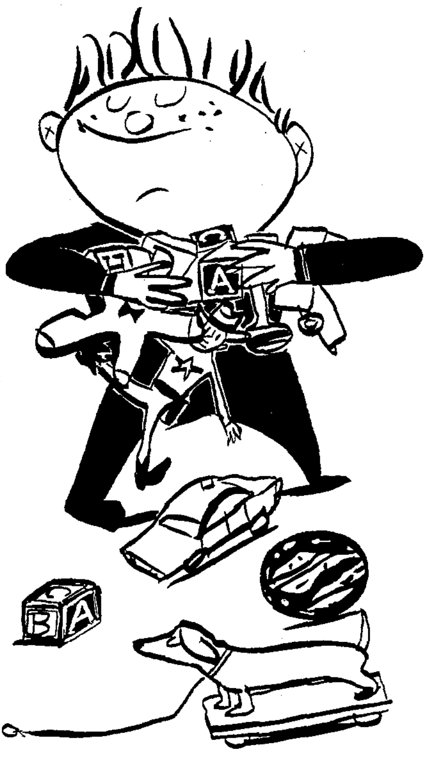


A polymorphous mass of willful protoplasm able to reshape the world through the unconscious exercise of its desires. It sounds like a character in a novel by Michael Crichton. But it's not; it's just the baby boomers demonstrating the implacability of the law of supply and demand. The first postwar crop of American offspring is so huge and so demographically concentrated that for half a century we have constituted an irresistible market force. What boomers want, boomers get, and we don't need to wheedle. In fact, we've got so much buying power that we don't even need to know ahead of time what we want.

Evidence of our omnipotence permeates the culture. We conjured up a plentiful supply of station wagons when we were Little Leaguers, muscle cars when we got our driver's licenses, thrifty imports when we were struggling young grownups, minivans and S.U.V.s when we became parents, and a wide selection of overpriced two-seaters now that we've hit middle age. Each successive reconception of the automobile, though seemingly fortuitous, has perfectly suited our requirements.

Our generation was the first with sufficient market clout to dictate the terms of its own adolescence—and what an adolescence it was. As soon as we were old enough to shave, the whole world had to stop what it was doing and spend a decade preoccupied with sex. Capitalism, with breathtaking efficiency, responded to our surging hormones by providing miniskirts, water beds, and coed dorms. (More recently, in anticipation of our evolving needs, the market has given us Viagra.)

The major childhood diseases were conquered when we began to catch them. Suburbia arose in order to give us sidewalks on which to ride our bikes. Airlines invented business class and frequent-flier miles once we started travelling for our employers. VCRs materialized when we lost interest in dating. The Soviet Union fell when we grew tired of fearing it. Golf clubs and tennis racquets got easier to use when we developed an interest in swinging them.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Back in the eighties, editorial writers used to warn that baby boomers would be the first Americans to be less prosperous, as a generation, than their parents. We responded, in the nineties, with the biggest bull market in history, treating ourselves to the fast-food version of getting rich. (Take my 401(k) and Super Size it, please!) Members of generations X and Y have not displaced us; they have merely become our worker bees, toiling in their windowless cubicles in Silicon Valley, mindlessly generating the capital gains on which we will retire.

We haven't finished yet, of course; our dynasty has another thirty or forty years to run. Guessing what those years will bring us doesn't require much imagination. Cure for arthritis. Coronary bypasses on an outpatient basis. Elimination of various inconvenient taxes (such as the one on our parents' estates). Redefinition of the potbelly as a secondary sexual characteristic.

But there's no need to prognosticate. Whatever the particulars turn out to be, we can already be certain of one thing: what we get will be exactly what we want.

—*David Owen*

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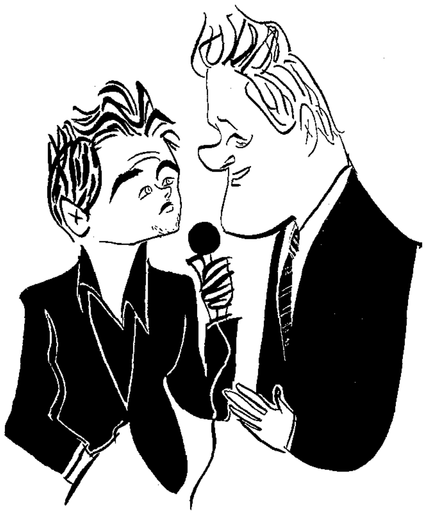
Artists subject to change. The New Yorker Festival is a co-production of The New Yorker Magazine and The John Schreiber Group.

BRAVE NEW WORLD DEPT.

TAKE TWO, LEO!

When ABC News asked Leonardo DiCaprio, the baby-faced matinée idol, to interview President Clinton for its Earth Day special, the usual hand-wringing over the blurring of news and entertainment ensued. It turns out, however, that the network's grownup, experienced correspondents had something more to complain about than being momentarily upstaged by a heartthrob. DiCaprio's interview with President Clinton, they say, is corrupted by a type of telegenic sleight of hand more appropriate to show business than to journalism.



Leonardo DiCaprio and Bill Clinton

When the movie star had his taped chat about global warming with the President, on the patio outside the Oval Office, he apparently wasn't the smooth talker moviegoers remember from belowdecks on the Titanic. According to onlookers, he was halting and nervous, although at no point did he slip up and address the President as "dude." After Clinton went back to work, DiCaprio was given the chance to "re-ask" his questions on camera. These retakes could then be spliced into the interview footage, to make DiCaprio appear suave and coolly confident.

"I was under the impression that they reshot it because they thought Leo flubbed some of his lines," Jake Siewert, a White House spokesman, said. "But it might have been visual. He was nervous. You could just tell."

As moviegoers of a pre-Leo generation will recall, the practice of taping re-asks was a plot point in James Brooks's 1987 film, "Broadcast News." In the movie, the hollow dreamboat of a newsman, played by William Hurt, horrifies colleagues by retaping his half of an interview and adding simulated tears. When "Broadcast News" came out, the plot shocked journalistic sensibilities, with its suggestion that a network news operation might fudge reality or promote a merely handsome correspondent in order to goose ratings.

Some current employees of ABC feel that way now. "Why are we in the position of having Leonardo DiCaprio doing re-asks while a stand-in sits in the President of the United States' chair?" one irate ABC News employee said the other day. (A production assistant named Stephanie Soechtig apparently "played" Clinton during the encore.) "It's because, for Leo, it's like a retake!" he continued. "He's an actor. It's all about how Leo looks and how Leo seems. It was all cosmetic!"

According to an ABC News spokesman, who asked not to be named, retaping interview questions does not violate ABC's carefully codified news practices, as long as the substance of the interview is not altered. But one network veteran suggested that the news guidelines allow for second-chance questions mainly to cover equipment failures—"when cameras break, or lighting messes up," he said. One of his colleagues added, "I don't think I have ever been involved in any interview when re-asks were done for cosmetic reasons, or for enhancement of the talent."

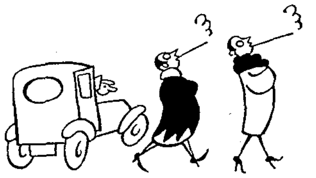
Meanwhile, with just days to go before the show airs, DiCaprio's questions are not the only part of the broadcast that will undergo editorial "enhancement." Numerous scenes of DiCaprio talking about environmental issues are being reshot, with him speaking many fewer lines but looking pretty. Executives in the news division have decided to take any words out of his mouth that could be construed as editorializing. And, after initially defending the practice of re-asking questions, ABC News decided late last week to keep DiCaprio's second takes in the can.

In Los Angeles, James Brooks was slightly dismayed to hear the news that his parody had become prophecy. "Oh, well," he said, in his customary deadpan manner. "It's nice to get some help with your numbing process."

—*Jane Mayer*

INK

OPRAH'S UNDERSTUDY



No need to worry about Oprah Winfrey, founder and editorial director of the new magazine *O*, who is staying put in Chicago while her fifty-odd underlings hole up in the Hearst Magazines headquarters, on Broadway. Gayle King, the editor-at-large and the boss's forty-five-year-old best friend, is on the job as staff liaison to Oprah. Miss King is a statuesque, superconfident, cheery former news anchor, with a perfect face and perfect teeth, auburn hair worn straight to the collar, and the immediately chummy, quick-talking, eager, breathy rhythms of the Rosie-Barbara-Katie sisterhood.

"Make no mistake, *O* is Oprah's magazine, and it's going to have the stamp and spirit of Oprah all over it. She wants themes of self-improvement and self-empowerment. As Oprah's oldest and closest friend, I know what Oprah likes and what Oprah wants, and I'm here to see that she gets it," Miss King said last week, sitting in a large conference room at the Hearst corporate offices, on Eighth Avenue (carpeted corridors and Robert Motherwell paintings on the walls), a block away from where the *O* staff works.

Miss King had on a navy tailored suit with light-blue pinstripes and wore navy silk Donna Karan pumps. As she talked, she wiggled a pinkie with a diamond ring on it. "Oprah gave me this—it's actually a toe ring," she said. "Oprah had two very, very large diamond earrings, and she had them made into several toe rings. She gave another one to Steadman's daughter, Wendy.

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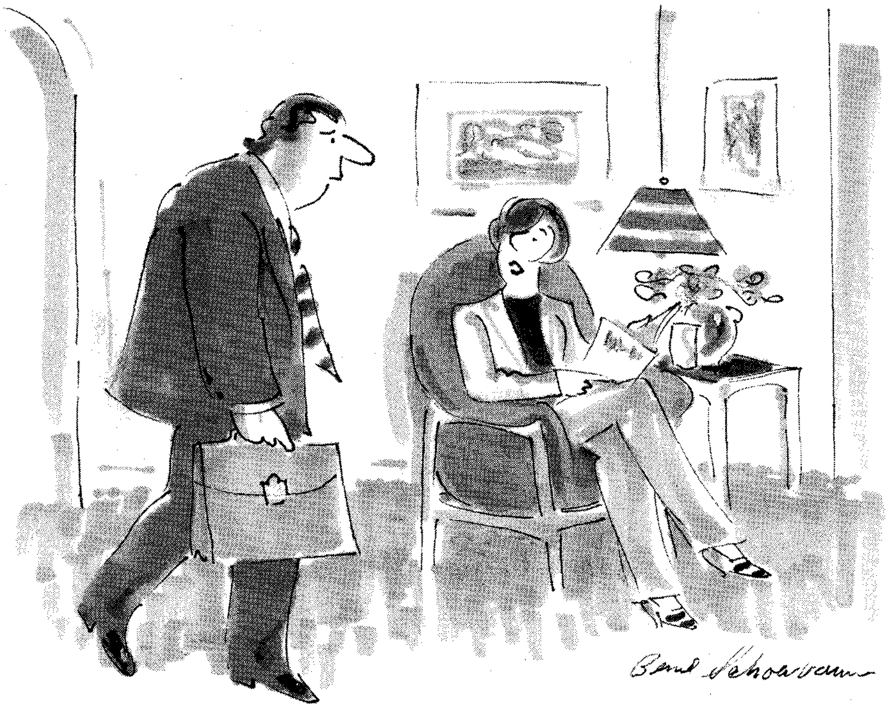
Steadman, as you know, is Oprah's longtime beau."

Miss King talked about how she came to work at *O.* "I told the Hearst people that I didn't want a made-up job, in case they were saying, 'Let's get her something; she's Oprah's friend.' I don't have a magazine background. Oprah doesn't have a magazine background. But we have others for that. My dad was an electrical engineer, and we lived in Turkey and travelled all over Europe. Much different background from Oprah's. She was molested as a child, raped at fourteen, gave birth to a baby who died after ten days. But everybody knows Oprah is tops.

"Oprah and I have been friends since 1977. I was twenty-one and she was twenty-two. She was the anchorwoman at WJZ-TV in Baltimore, and I was a lowly production assistant. I barely knew her. I had an Oldsmobile Cutlass, a much better car than her Chevy Chevette. Even so, one night there was a bad snowstorm, and she said—typical of her—'Why don't you stay over at my place?' I said, 'I have no clothes.' She said, 'We're the same size. I'll give you clothes.' I said, 'I have no underwear.' She said, 'I'll give you underwear.' So we stayed up all night talking. We told each other all the gossip, who was going out with whom. Some people just click. We clicked. We haven't stopped talking since. Oprah knows all the dirt. We never run out of things to talk about. We have so much in common. Our shoe size is the same, ten. Our contact lenses have the same prescription. Our phone numbers—it just happened—are the same, backward.

"Why me in this job? A: I can get to Oprah quickly, late at night, early in the morning, whenever. B: I make a contribution. I know a good story. I'm smart. Oprah really *works* as the editorial director, harder than she ever thought. She's putting in five hours a day after she does both of her TV shows. She comes up with all the creative ideas, like the 'Something to Think About' page, where we ask questions like 'How would I change my life if I only had one year to live? One month? One day?,' and leave space for the reader to write things down. Or 'The *O* List,' the list of things she likes: for instance, a particular Burberry dog collar, because she's nuts about her dogs—two cocker spaniels—and the Rocket eBook. Another one of Oprah's ideas is the 'Who Knew?' department, stuff like 'Did you know that Tina Turner likes scary stories?' On that one, I said no to a particular celebrity, because I know that this celebrity is not a good person.



"What was it this time, old economy or new economy?"

"Now I'll tell you something that we were arguing about for days, about the cover: whether to put the *O* on top and 'The Oprah Magazine' under it, or leave it 'The Oprah Magazine' on top and the *O* underneath." Miss King drew a sketch of the choices on a scrap of paper. "Which do you prefer?" she asked.

"*O* on top."

Miss King gave a squeal of delight. "That's what *I* said! And everybody else was against it. But that's what I told Oprah, and that's what she chose."

"I work with the others at the magazine as an ensemble. If I disagree with them about sending something on to Oprah, I say, 'Go ahead, send it to her.' But *I* know what Oprah thinks. I even sound like her. It's funny. When my three sisters hear Oprah on her show, they can't tell who's talking. They think it's me."

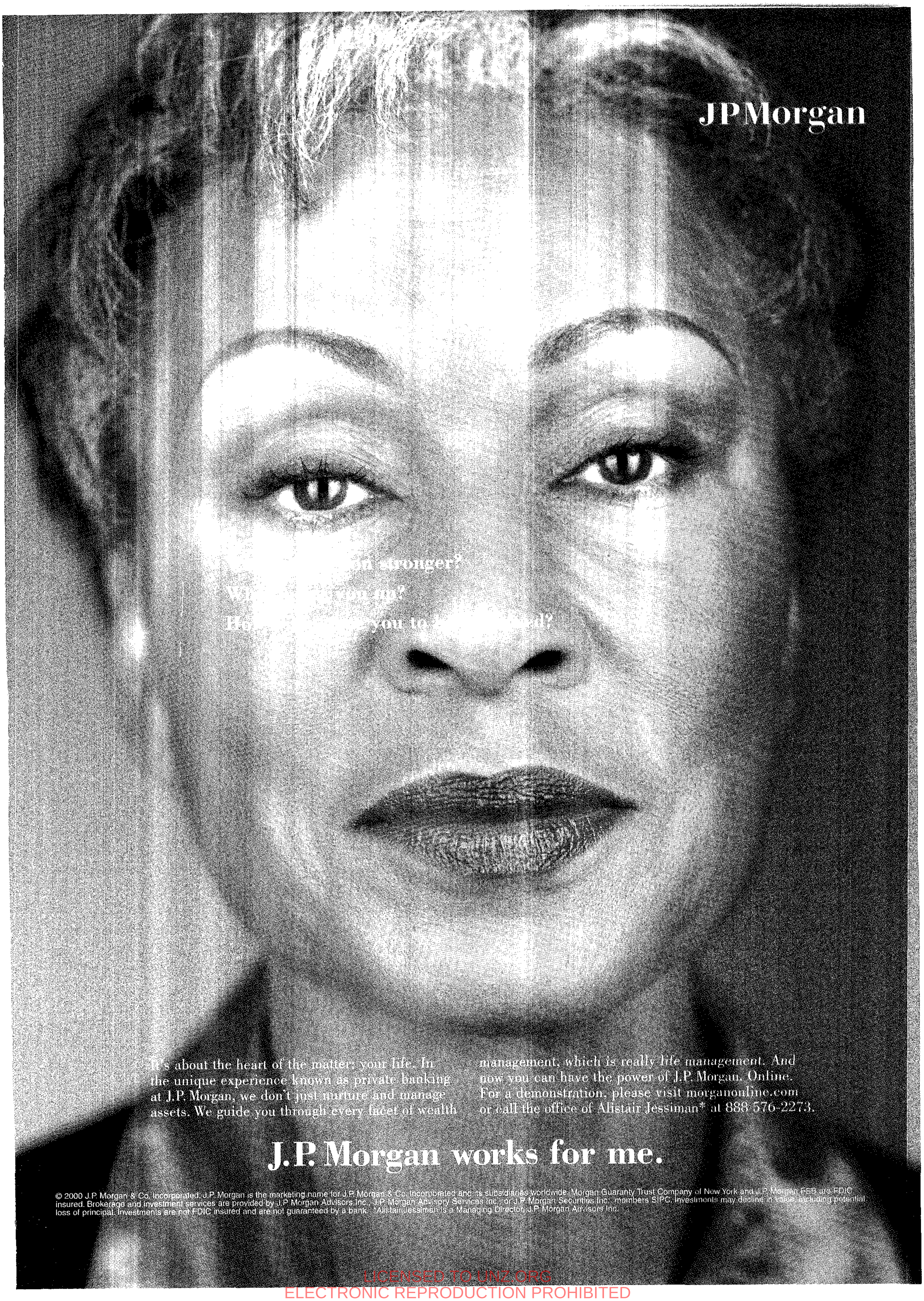
—*Lillian Ross*

WIND ON CAPITOL HILL

THE GUY WHO MAKES THE PRESIDENT FUNNY

It is not, perhaps, the most important event in Bill Clinton's farewell tour of Washington, but April 29th marks the President's final speech at the White House Correspondents' Dinner, and thus the last time he must deliver laughs on command. As a consequence, the occasion is a turning point for a thirty-six-year-old New Yorker named Mark Katz, who has served as Clinton's chief jokewriter for both tumultuous terms. "It's been a remarkable window on this Administration," Katz said the other day over lunch. "I can tell you the joke answer to every crisis that's come up—the haircut, gays in the military, everything. I've sat in front of a word processor and tried to handle them all."

Katz is on the short side, built close to the ground, and he is easily amused. (What, you expected Gary Cooper?) Like most humorists, he began his career by getting thrown out of class in the seventh grade, in his case in Rockland County, a place Katz remembers as "a hotbed of social rest." After college, he

JPMorgan

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volunteered in the Dukakis campaign and soon found himself a sort of comedy czar for that doomed undertaking. "Yes, I'm the man who made Mike Dukakis so funny," he said. "When people say that campaign was a joke, I can't help but feel a little proud."

Katz puttered around in advertising for a few years, until, in 1993, friends from the Dukakis campaign hooked him up with Clinton for the annual round of after-dinner speeches—at the Gridiron, Radio and TV, and White House Correspondents' Dinners—where the President was expected to entertain ballrooms full of grumpy reporters in evening dress. Katz has come to see the speeches as a kind of unofficial history of the Clinton years. "He says stuff in these speeches that he never would have said anywhere else," Katz suggests. For example, the President never admitted that he used the Lincoln Bedroom to raise campaign funds, but at the 1996 Correspondents' Dinner he said, "The bad news is, our only child is going off to college. The good news is, it opens up another bedroom." Last year, Clinton winked at his well-known distaste for the correspondents themselves, noting that if he had lost the impeachment vote in the Senate he would not be appearing before them. "I demand a recount," he intoned. There are, however, no Clinton jokes about skirt-chasing.

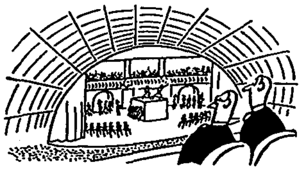
Katz has turned his post as shtickmaster general of the United States into a one-man humor-consulting operation that he calls the Sound Bite Institute. In addition to various corporate jobs, Katz has consulted with Hillary Clinton and has advised Al Gore on a number of recent speeches. (Gore turned down one of his more edgy offerings: "You know, the Washington *Post* just reported that I got C's and D's in my sophomore year, but they failed to report that that was also the year I invented the bong.")

Katz's fondest memory of his White House years concerns a speech that Clinton did not give. "I was all set to do the rehearsal for his White House Correspondents' speech in 1995," Katz recalled, "and at the last minute they decided that it was too close to the Oklahoma City bombing for him to do something funny. I was despondent. Then, a couple of minutes later, I got a call that the President wanted to see me. I ran back to the Oval Office, and he said, 'Let's just read it through for laughs.' And that's what he did, and it was probably my funniest speech ever. So I've been pitied at the highest levels. He felt my pain."

—*Jeffrey Toobin*

DEPT. OF PRIZES

THE OPERA THAT ALMOST NOBODY HEARD



While millions of Americans were watching the Super Bowl, on January 30th, about three hundred people turned out at Harvard University's Paine Hall to hear a concert version of the second act of an ambitious, high-modernist opera entitled "Life Is a Dream," based on the seventeenth-century play "La Vida Es Sueño," by Pedro Calderón. Encouraged by an enthusiastic reception, the opera's composer, Lewis Spratlan, submitted a recording of the performance to the committee that awards the annual Pulitzer Prize for music. Last week, twenty-four hours after he learned that he had been named this year's Pulitzer winner, Spratlan, who is a professor of music at Amherst, said that he was "still in shock."

The chairman of the Pulitzer music committee this year, the composer Gunther Schuller, who happened to be in Paine Hall that night, said, "Not only is this the first opera in nearly forty years to receive a Pulitzer but I can't remember when a Pulitzer committee was so transfixed. Usually, we listen to the first five or ten minutes of a submission and then skip to the end. Spratlan's work lasted an hour, and nobody wanted it to stop."

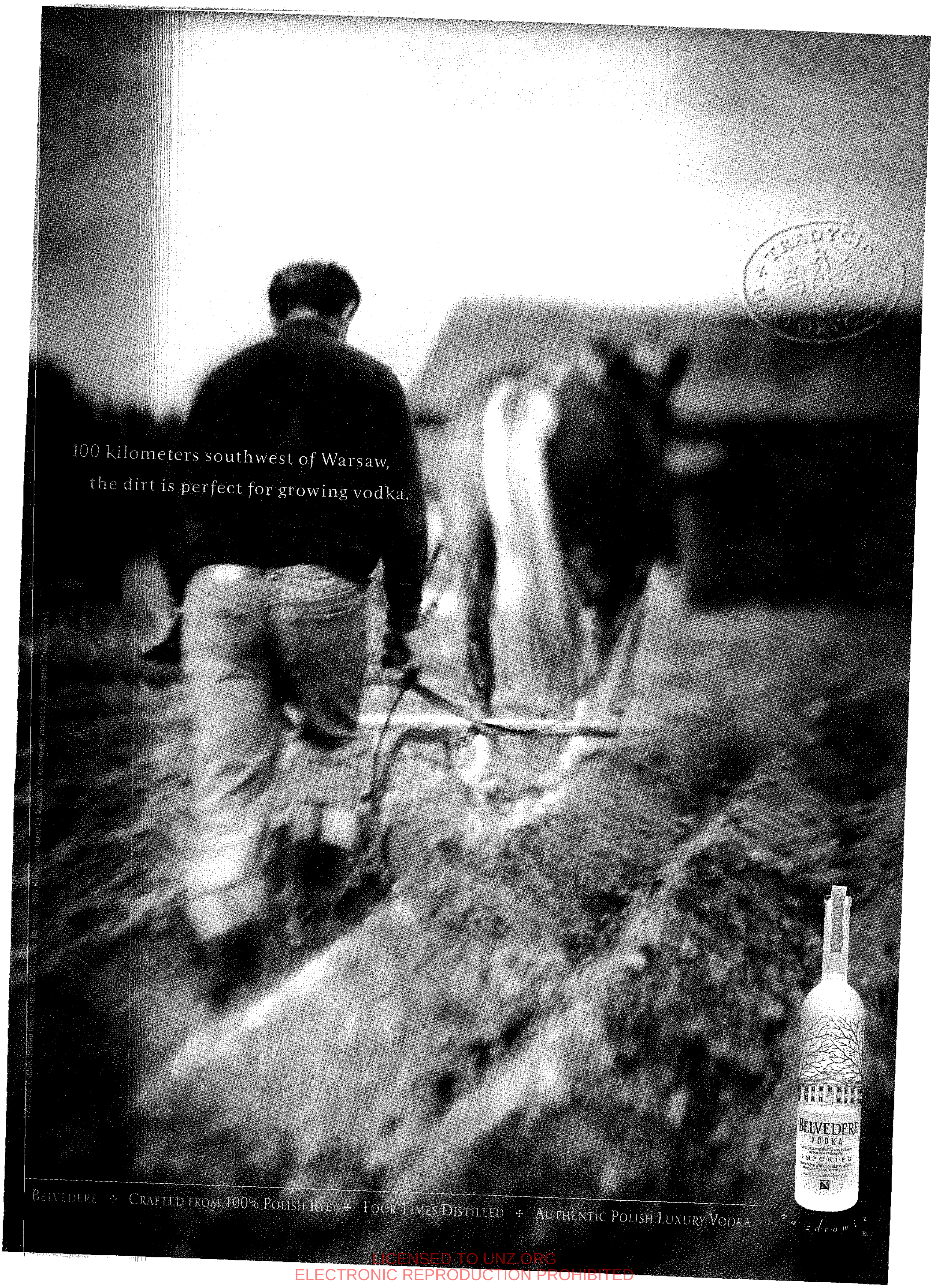
Although the Pulitzer generally goes to the best new piece by an American composer, "Life Is a Dream" was completed more than twenty years ago. Until this January, however, it had gone almost entirely unheard. In 1975, Spratlan, who was then thirty-five, was commissioned by the New Haven Opera Theatre to write an opera. He decided to base it on the Calderón play, which has overtones of both *Oedipus* and *King Lear*. Spratlan mentioned the project to his neighbor James Maraniss, who happened to have written his Ph.D. dissertation on Calderón. Over three summer vacations, Maraniss, who is now a professor of Spanish at Amherst, translated the play's baroque Spanish into dramatic English. Spratlan, who was writing mostly in the atonal idiom that was fashionable at the time, composed a score that he describes as "sharply attuned to the differences between the characters." The opera was nearly finished when the New Haven company folded, in 1978.

"I was desolate, but I started shopping it around," Spratlan recalled. "My publisher sent it all over the place—the Houston Grand Opera, the Chicago Lyric, San Diego, Seattle, Santa Fe, Barcelona, you name it. Dead silence. Then, two years ago, I got a grant of fifteen thousand dollars for a new piece, and I thought, Well, I'm not getting any younger and I want to hear at least some part of this opera before I croak."

Starting with the grant, Spratlan raised seventy-two thousand dollars to pay for two concerts of his works, including Act II of "Life Is a Dream," which he says is "the heart of the piece." He got the conductor J. David Jackson to direct a thirty-four-piece ensemble. John Cheek, the veteran Metropolitan Opera bass, and two rising young singers, the tenor Allan Glassman and the soprano Christina Bouras, agreed to lead the cast. The world première took place in Amherst, on January 28th, and of the second performance, in Cambridge two nights later, Gunther Schuller says, "It was just impeccable, and I think I've used that word only four times in my life."

Within hours of the Pulitzer announcement, Spratlan got word that a number of companies were interested in producing the complete opera. For now, however, he is still coasting on the memory of that performance at Paine Hall. "The opera had been in labor for twenty-two years," he said. "Apart from the normal exhilaration you feel when performers bring the music in your head to life, it had the added element of *at last*." Did he recall who won the Super Bowl? "No," Spratlan said. "I was oblivious of it. But let's see. Wasn't Tennessee playing?"

—*Charles Michener*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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

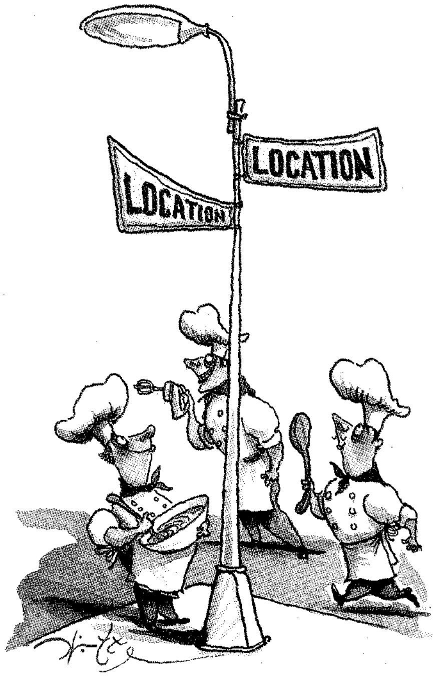
WHY DO COMPANIES LIKE COMPANY?

In the spring of 1997, when I moved to Brooklyn, Smith Street was a stretch of vacant storefronts and bad Chinese restaurants. It was just a block away from the main thoroughfare of Cobble Hill and Carroll Gardens, but there was hardly anything there. Today, Smith Street is the place to eat in Brooklyn. In the space of nine blocks, it has eight high-end restaurants, and a new one seems to open every month. On a typical weekend night, the sidewalk is thronged with hopeful dot-commers and media types, all waiting for a table at the Smith Street Kitchen, the Argentine steakhouse Sur, or Patois, the bistro that started this whole phenomenon when it opened, in December of 1997. In a little more than two years, an entirely new economy has been created, simply because all these different restaurants decided it would be a good idea to open their doors right next to their competitors.

If you live in New York, you take it for granted that similar businesses will congregate, what with the garment district, the button district, the camera district, and, of course, the diamond district, on West Forty-seventh Street. But if you had the choice wouldn't you rather be the only game in town? You could drive hard bargains with your suppliers. You wouldn't have to worry about customers deciding that the prices next door were just a little better, or that your menu wasn't quite what they were in the mood for. And you wouldn't have your best workers joining your competitors, or even starting a new place just up the street.

All this is true, but for most businesses being near competitors offers advantages that they can't get on their own. People now know that they can go to Smith Street and be guaranteed a good meal, and that they'll be able to get that meal without an endless wait, since if one restaurant is packed there's a good chance they'll be able to get in somewhere else. Opening a restaurant on Smith Street has become easier, too, in part because banks are more willing to lend money as they see the street change. Yes, there's competition for customers, but what restaurants, fabric stores, and diamond dealers have in common is that their products, though similar, are not interchangeable. Some people go for the grilled sturgeon with pomegranate vinaigrette and some people go for the Argentine skirt steak with chimichurri.

The importance of clusters isn't a new idea in economics. Alfred Marshall, one of the greatest economists of the nineteenth century, actually coined the phrase "industrial districts" to describe the concentration of cutlery makers in Sheffield and of cotton mills in Lancashire. And Marshall's basic point about why companies in the same industry congregate still holds: industrial districts enjoy the same economies of scale that only giant companies normally get. Specialized suppliers arrive. Skilled workers know where to come to ply their trade. And everyone involved benefits from the spillover of specialized knowledge. As Marshall put it, "The mysteries of the trade become no mysteries, but are as it were in the air."



MICHAEL WITTE

And so the costs of clustering—rising real-estate prices, contentious suppliers, and workers who know they can quit today and get a job across the street tomorrow—are outweighed by the benefits. Bargaining with suppliers may be harder at first, but as more suppliers arrive (and they will) it gets easier. Working closely with suppliers makes businesses more efficient, even in the Internet era. And though it's harder to hold on to workers, there are also many more workers to choose from.

A successful cluster becomes a kind of brand in its own right. If the Smith Street brand helps aggregate demand (all those hungry diners), an industrial brand like Silicon Valley helps aggregate supply (of labor, capital, technology, and knowledge). Annalee Saxenian, a regional-planning expert at Berkeley, has shown that skilled workers gravitate toward other skilled workers. "Silicon Valley," for instance, becomes a shorthand way of letting engineers know where they can find people they'd like to work with. And this is a classic virtuous circle—at least, if you're inside it—because the more smart people there are in a region the more smart people will migrate there. The same rule seems to apply to investors and entrepreneurs. To those who have much, much shall be given. As long as they can swing the rent.

In recent years, every ambitious region in the world has tried to create its own clusters. Catalonia, for instance, is promoting clusters around wooden toys, processed meats, and consumer electronics, among other trades. But those who are playing capitalist catch-up can probably learn a thing or two from Silicon Valley. According to Saxenian, its spectacular success had a lot to do with a Californian culture of networking, relatively fluid boundaries between companies, and a fairly decentralized and coöperative way of doing business. The founder of a semiconductor firm told her, "There are a lot of people who come to work in the morning believing that they work for Silicon Valley."

The capitalism of cliché is supposed to sound like Conan the Barbarian: "Crush your enemies. See them driven before you. Hear the lamentations of their women." Clustering reminds us that capitalism, just as often, can sound like Mr. Rogers: "Please won't you be my neighbor?"

—*James Surowiecki*

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LETTER FROM LOS ANGELES

THE YOUNG GARMENTOS

The T-shirt trade becomes a calling.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

Dov Charney started his T-shirt business, American Apparel, on the corner of Santa Fe Avenue and the 10 Freeway, a mile or so from downtown Los Angeles. Actually, his factory was built directly underneath the eastbound and westbound lanes, and the roof over the room where the cutters and sewers work was basically the freeway itself, so that the clicking and clacking of sewing machines mixed with the rumble of tractor trailers. It was not, as Dov was the first to admit, an ideal location, with the possible exception that it was just two blocks from the Playpen, the neighborhood strip bar, which made it awfully convenient whenever he decided to conduct a fitting. "Big companies tend to hire fitting models at a hundred bucks an hour," Dov explained recently as he headed over to the Playpen to test some of his new T-shirts. "But they only give you one look. At a strip bar, you get a cross-section of chicks. You've got big chicks, little chicks, big-assed chicks, little-assed chicks, chicks with big tits, and chicks with little tits. You couldn't ask for a better place to fit a shirt."

He had three of his staff with him, and half a dozen samples of his breakthrough Classic Girl line of "baby T"s, in this case shirts with ribbed raglan three-quarter sleeves in lilac and pink. He walked quickly, leaning forward slightly, as if to improve his aerodynamics. Dov is thirty-one years old and has thick black hair and blue-tinted aviator glasses, and tends to dress in khakis and knit vintage shirts, with one of his own T-shirts as an undergarment. In front of the Playpen, Dov waved to the owner, a middle-aged Lebanese man in a red guayabera, and ushered his group into the gloom of the bar. At this hour—two o'clock in the afternoon—the Playpen was almost empty; just one girl gyrated for a customer, to what sounded like the music from "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves." The situation was ideal, because it meant the rest of the girls had time to model.

The first to come over was Diana, dark-haired and buxom. She slipped out of a yellow mesh dress and pulled on one of Dov's baby T's. Dov examined her critically. He was concerned about the collar. The Classic Girl is supposed to have a snug fit, with none of the torquing and bowing that plague lesser shirts. But the prototype was bunching around the neck. Dov gestured to one of his colleagues. "Olin, look what's going on here. I think there's too much binding going into the machine." Diana turned around, and wiggled her behind playfully. Dov pulled the T-shirt tight. "I think it could be a little longer here," he said, pursing his lips. Baby T's, in their earlier incarnation, were short, in some cases above the belly button—something that Dov considers a mistake. The music was now deafening, and over a loudspeaker a "lap-dance promo" was being announced. Dov, oblivious, turned his attention to Mandy, a svelte, long-legged blonde in a black bikini. On her, Dov observed, the shirt did not fit so "emphatically" around the chest as it had on Diana. Dov looked Mandy up and down, tugging and pulling to get the shirt just right. "When you're doing a fitting, often the more oddly shaped girl will tell you a lot more," he said. By now, a crowd of strippers was gathering around him, presumably attracted by the novelty of being asked by a customer to put clothes on. But Dov had seen all he needed to. His life's great cause—which is to produce the world's finest T-shirt for between three and four dollars wholesale—had advanced another step. "What did I learn today?" he asked, as he strode out the door. "I learned that my sleeves are perfect. But I see a quality problem with

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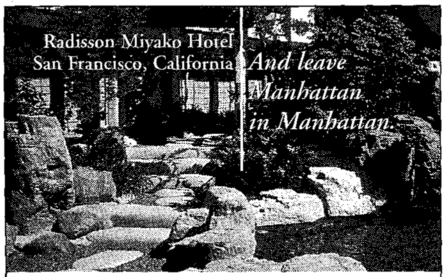
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Dov Charney (second from left), with Rick Klotz, learning more about the perfect baby T. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

SABA

the collar." He thought for a moment. "And I definitely have to add an inch to the garment."

There is a town in upstate New York, just north and west of Albany, called Gloversville, so named because in the late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century ninety-five per cent of the fine gloves sold in the United States were manufactured there. At one time, there were a hundred and sixteen glove factories in the town, employing twelve thousand people and turning out fifteen million dollars' worth of gloves a year. New glove start-ups appeared all the time, whenever some glove entrepreneur—some ambitious *handschumacher*—had a better idea about how to make a glove. A trade journal, *Glovers Review*, covered the industry's every step. Local firms—such as Jacob Adler & Co. and Louis Meyers & Sons and Elite Glove Co.—became nationally known brands. When the pogroms of Eastern Europe intensified, in the eighteen-eighties, the Jewish glove cutters of Warsaw—the finest leather artisans of nineteenth-century Europe—moved en masse to Gloversville, because Gloversville was where you went in those days if you cared about gloves.

It's hard to imagine anyone caring so deeply about gloves, and had we visited Gloversville in its prime most of us would have found it a narrow and provincial place. But if you truly know gloves and think about them and dream about them and, more important, if you are surrounded every day by a community of people who know and think and dream about gloves, a glove becomes more than a glove. In Gloversville, there was an elaborate social hierarchy. The *handschumacher* considered himself so-

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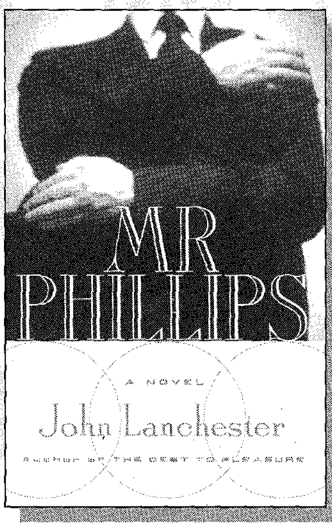

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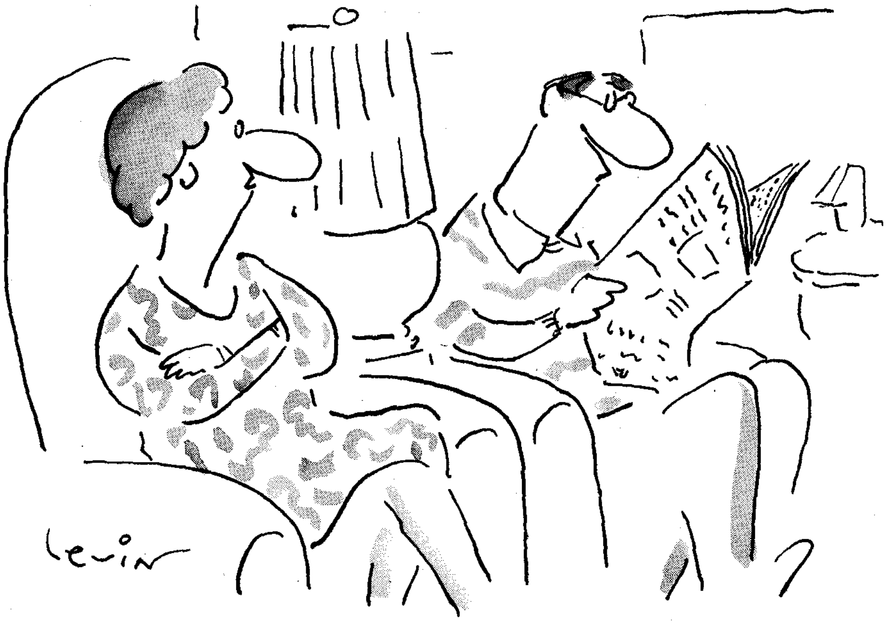
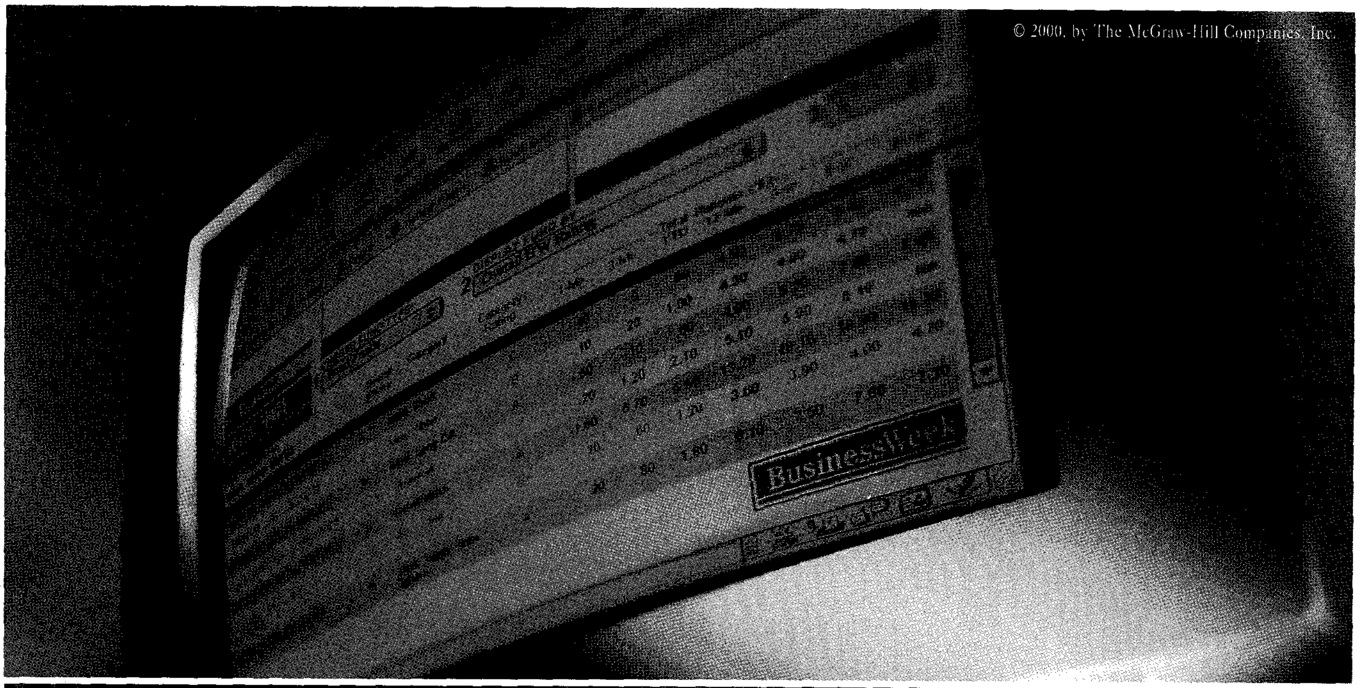
cially and intellectually superior to the *schuster* and the *schneider*—the shoemaker and the tailor. To cover the hands, after all, was the highest calling. (As the glover's joke goes, "Did you ever see anyone talk using his boots?") Within the glove world, in turn, the "makers"—the silkers, the closers, and the fourchetters, who sewed the gloves—were inferior to the "cutters," who first confronted the hide, and who advertised their status by going to work wearing white shirts and collars, bow ties or cravats, tigereye cufflinks, and carefully pressed suits. A skilled cutter could glance at a glove and see in it the answers to a hundred questions. Is the leather mocha, the most pliable of all skins, taken from the hide of long-black-haired Arabian sheep? Or is it South African capeskin, the easiest to handle? Is it kid from Spain, peccary from the wild pigs of Brazil and Mexico, chamois from Europe, or cabretta, from a Brazilian hairy sheep? Is the finish "grained"—showing the outside of the hide—or "velvet," meaning that the leather has been buffed? Is it sewn in a full-piqué stitch or a half-piqué, an osann or an overseam? Do the color and texture of the fourchette—the strip of leather that forms the sides of the fingers—match the adjoining leather? The lesson of Gloversville is that behind every ordinary object is a group of people to whom that object is anything but ordinary.

Dov Charney lives in his own, modern-day version of Gloversville. He is part of a world that cares about T-shirts every bit as much as the *handschumachers* cared about peccary and cabretta. It is impossible to talk about Dov, for example, without talking about his best friend, Rick Klotz, who runs a clothing company named Fresh Jive, about a mile and a half from Dov's factory. Rick, who is thirty-two, designs short-sleeve shirts and baggy pants and pullovers and vests and printed T-shirts with exquisite graphics (featuring everything from an obscure typographical scheme to the Black Panthers). In the eighties, Rick was a punker, at least until everyone else got short hair, at which point he grew his hair long. Later, in his Ted Nugent-and-TransAm phase, he had, he says, a "big, filthy mustache, like Cheech." Now he is perfectly bald, and drives a black custom-made late-model Cadillac Fleetwood Limited, with a VCR in the back, and, because he sits very low in the seat, and bobs up and down to very loud hip-hop as he drives, the effect, from the street, is slightly comic, like that of a Ping-Pong ball in choppy water. When Dov first came to Los Angeles, a few years ago, he crashed at Rick's apartment in Hollywood, and the two grew so close that Rick believes he and Dov were "separated at birth."

"If it wasn't for Rick, I wouldn't have been able to make it," Dov says. "I slept on his couch. I checked in for a few days,



"If I were money, you'd listen to me."



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NICK DOWNES

"Where are you going with this, Wingate?"

stayed for a year." This was after an initial foray that Dov had made into the T-shirt business, in South Carolina in the early nineties, failed. "When he lived with me, he was on the brink," Rick added. "Every day was the same. Go to sleep at two with the phone. Then wake up at six to call back East. One time, he was just crying and losing it. It was just so heavy. I was, like, 'Dude, what are you doing?' "

What do Rick and Dov have in common? It isn't a matter of personality. Dov says that sometimes when he's out with Rick he'll spot one of Rick's T-shirts, and he'll shout, "There's one of your T-shirts!" Rick will look down and away, embarrassed, because he's so acutely aware of how uncool that sounds. Dov couldn't care less. When he spots his own work, he can hardly contain himself. "I always say, 'Hey' "—Dov put on the accent of his native Montreal—" 'where did you get that shirt?' Like, if I'm on the subway in New York City. I say, 'You want some more?' I take my bag and give them out for free. I'm excited about it. I could be watching TV at night, or I could be watching a porno, and, boom, there is my T-shirt. I've made millions of them. I always know it!"

What the two of them share is a certain sensibility. Rick grew up in the Valley and Dov grew up in Montreal, but it's as if they were born and raised in the same small town, where the T-shirt was something that you lived and died for. At dinner one recent night in L.A., Rick talked about how he met Dov, several years ago, at a big trade show in Las Vegas. "I'm at this party sitting out on the balcony. I see this guy dancing and he's—what's the word?" And here Rick did a kind of spastic gyration in his seat. "Imbecilic. He didn't care what anybody thought. And he catches me looking and goes like this." Rick made two pistols out of his fingers, and fired one hand after another. "I was, like, in love."

Dov seemed touched. "You know, I knew of Rick long before I ever met him. His T-shirt graphics are some of the most respected T-shirt graphics in the world. I swear to God."

But Rick was being modest again. "No, they're not."

"If you mention Fresh Jive in most industrialized countries to people that know what good graphics are on T-shirts, they're, like . . ." Dov made an appreciative noise. "I swear, it's like a connoisseur's wine."

"Maybe at one time," Rick murmured.

"He is an artist!" Dov went on, his voice rising. "His canvas is fabric!"

On the day that he made his foray to the Playpen, Dov met with a fortyish man named Jhean. In the garment-manufacturing business in Los Angeles, the up-and-coming entrepreneurs are Persian and Korean. (Dov has a partner who is Korean.) The occasional throwback, like Dov, is Jewish. Jhean, however, is Haitian. He used to work in government, but now he is in the garment business, a career change of which Dov heartily approved. Jhean was wearing tight black pants, a red silk shirt open to mid-chest, and a gold chain. Dov put his arm around him affectionately. "Jhean is a crazy man," he announced, to no one in particular. "He was going to be one of my partners. We were going to get this whole Montreal Jewish-Korean-Haitian thing going." Jhean turned away, and Dov lowered his voice to a whisper. "Jhean has it in his blood, you know," he said, meaning a feel for T-shirts.

Dov led Jhean outside, and they sat on a bench, the sun peeking through at them between the off-ramp and the freeway lanes. Jhean handed Dov a men's Fruit of the Loom undershirt, size medium. It was the reason for Jhean's visit. "Who can do this for me?" he asked.

Dov took the shirt and unfolded it slowly. He held it up in front of his eyes, as a mother might hold a baby, and let out a soft whistle. "This is an unbelievable garment," he said. "Nobody has the machines to make it, except for two parties that I'm aware of. Fruit of the Loom. And Hanes. The shirt is a two-by-one rib. They've taken out one or two of the needles. It's a coarse yarn. And it's tubular, so there is no waste. This is one of the most efficient garments in the world. It comes off the tube like a sock."

Some T-shirts have two seams down each side: they are made with "open width" fabric, by sewing together the front and the back of the T-shirt. This T-shirt had no seams. It was cut from cotton fabric that had been knitted into a T-shirt-size tube, which is a trickier procedure but means less wasted fabric, lower sewing costs, and less of the twisting that can distort a garment.

Dov began to run his fingers along the bottom of the shirt, which had been not hemmed but overlocked—with a stitch—to save even more fabric. "This costs, with the right equipment, maybe a dollar. My cost is a dollar-thirty, a dollar-fifty. The finest stuff is two-fifty, two-sixty. If you can make this shirt, you can make millions. But you can't make this shirt. Hanes actually does this even better than Fruit of the Loom. They've got this dialled down." Jhean wondered if he could side-seam it, but Dov just shook his head. "If you side-seam it, you lose the whole energy."

You could tell that Dov was speaking as much to himself as to Jhean. He was saying that he couldn't reproduce a master-

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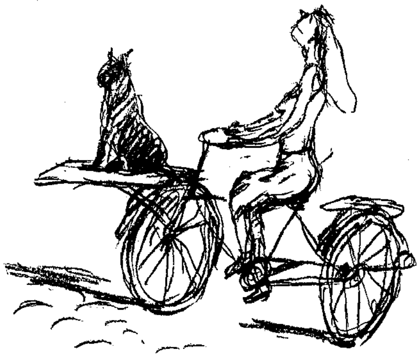
piece like that undershirt, either. But there was no defeat in his voice, because he knew enough about T-shirts to realize that there is more than one way to make a perfect garment. Dov likes to point out that the average American owns twenty-five T-shirts—twenty-five!—and, even if you reckon, as he does, that of those only between four and seven are in regular rotation, that's still an enormous market.

The garment in question was either eighteen- or twenty-singles yarn, which is standard for T-shirts. But what if a T-shirt maker were to use thirty-singles yarn, knitted on a fine-gauge machine, which produces a thinner, more "fashion-forward" fabric? The Fruit of the Loom piece was open-end cotton, and open-end is coarse. Dov likes "ring-spun combed" yarn, which is much softer, and costs an extra eighty cents a pound. Softness also comes from the way the fabric is processed before cutting, and Dov is a stickler for that kind of detail. "I have a lot of secret ingredients," he says. "Just like K.F.C. There is the amount of yarn in one revolution, which determines the tightness. There's the spacing of the needle. Then there's the finishing. What kind of chemicals are you using in the finishing? We think this through. We've developed a neurosis about this." In his teens, Dov hooked up with a friend who was selling printed T's outside the Montreal Forum, and Dov's contribution was to provide American Hanes instead of the Canadian poly-cotton-blend Penmans. The Hanes, Dov says, was "creamier," and he contended that the Canadian T-shirt consumer deserved that extra creaminess. When he's inspecting rolls of fabric, Dov will sometimes break into the plastic package wrap and run his hand over the cotton, palm flat, and if you look behind his tinted aviators you'll see that his eyes have closed slightly. Once, he held two white swatches up to the light, in order to demonstrate how one had "erections"—little fibres that stood up straight on the fabric—and the other did not, and then he ran his hand ever so slightly across the surface of the swatch he liked, letting the fibres tickle his palm. "I'm particular," Dov explained. "Like in my underwear. I'm very committed to Hanes thirty-two. I've been wearing it for twelve years. I sleep in it. And if Hanes makes any adjustments I'm picking it up. I watch. They change their labels, they use different countries to make their shit, I know."

Dov was back inside his factory now, going from the room where all the sewers sit, stitching up T-shirts, to a passageway lined with big rolls of fabric. The fact that Jhean's Fruit of the Loom undershirt was of rib fabric launched him on one of his favorite topics, which was the fabric he personally helped rediscover—baby rib. Baby rib is rib in which the ridges are so close together and the cotton is so fine that it looks like standard T-shirt jersey, and Dov's breakthrough was to realize that because of the way it stretches and supports and feels it was perfect for girls. "See this, that's conventional rib." He pulled on a piece of white fabric, exposing wide ridges of cotton. "It's knitted on larger machines. And it's a larger, bulkier yarn. It's poor-quality cotton. But girls want softness. So, rather than take the cheap road, I've taken the higher road." Dov's baby rib uses finer cotton and tighter stitching, and the fit is tighter across the chest and shoulders, the way he believes a T-shirt ought to look. "There were a few influences," he said, reflecting on the creative process that brought him to baby rib. "I'm not sure which girlfriend, but we can name some." He ticked them off on his fingers. "There's Marcella, from Argentina. I met her in South Beach. She wore these little tops made in South America. And they were finer than the tops that girls were wearing in the States. I got such a boner looking at her in that T-shirt that I thought, This is doing something for me. We've got to explore this opportunity. This was four, five years ago. O.K., I broke up with her, and I started going out with this stripper, Julie, from South Carolina. She had a gorgeous body. She was all-American. And, you know, Julie looked so great in those little T-shirts. She put one on and it meant something."



Dov pulled out a single typewritten page, a draft of a "mission statement" he was preparing for the industry. This was for a new line of Standard American T-shirts he wanted to start making—thirty-singles, ring-spun, tubular shirts knit on custom-made Asian equipment. "Dear Client," it began:

> During the last ten years major T-shirt makers such as Hanes and Fruit of the Loom have focused on being "heavier" and generously cut. Innovation and style have been put aside, and there has been a perpetual price war during the last four years. The issues are who can be cheaper, bigger or heavier. . . . Concerns about fit or issues of softness or stretch have been the last priority and have been barely considered. In order to create leadership we have reconstructed the T-shirt and have made a deviation from the traditional "Beefy-T" styled garment. We have redone the typical pattern. It is slightly more fitted—especially in the sleeve and armhole opening. . . . Yes the fabric is lighter, and we think that is a positive aspect of the garment. The garment has a stretch that is reminiscent of T-shirts from decades ago.

Dov was peering over my shoulder as I read. "We're going to kick everybody's ass," he announced. "The finest T-shirts are six dollars a piece wholesale. The shittiest shirts are like two dollars. We're going to come in at three and have the right stuff. I'm making the perfect fit. I'm going to manufacture this like gasoline."

If you ask Dov why he's going to these lengths, he'll tell you that it matters to him that Americans can buy an affordable and high-quality T-shirt. That's an admirable notion, but, of course, most of us don't really know what constitutes a high-quality T-shirt: we don't run our hands over a swatch of cotton and let the little fibres tickle our palm, or ruminate on the difference between side-seaming and tubularity. For that matter, few people who bought dress gloves in 1900 knew the difference between a full-piqué or a half-piqué stitch, between high-grade or merely medium-grade peccary. Producers, the economics textbooks tell us, are disciplined by the scrutiny of the marketplace. Yet what of commonplace articles such as T-shirts and gloves, about which most customers don't know enough or care enough to make fine discriminations? Discipline really comes not from customers but from other producers. And here again

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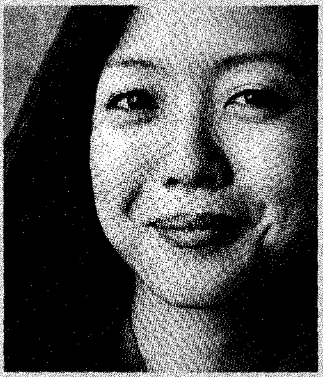

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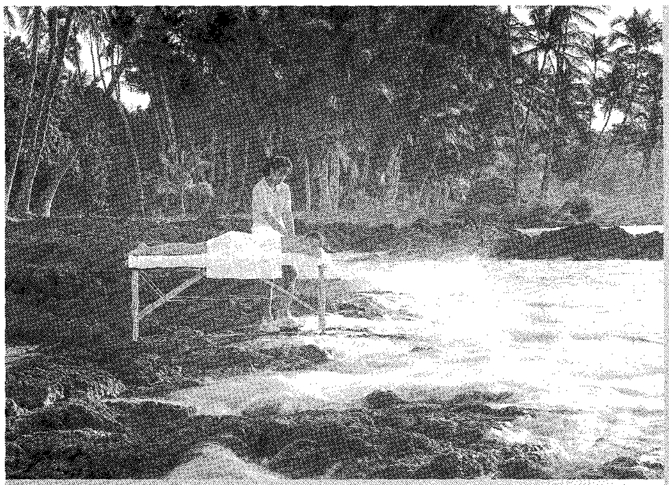

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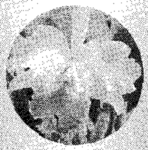

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the economics textbooks steer us wrong, because they place too much emphasis on the role of formal competitors, the Gap or Hanes or the other big glovemaker in your niche. To be sure, Dov can occasionally be inspired by a truly exceptional garment like, say, a two-by-one ribbed undershirt from Fruit of the Loom. But in Gloversville the critical person is not so much the distant rival as the neighbor who is also a contractor, or the guy at the bar downtown who used to be in the business, or the friend at synagogue who is also an expert glovemaker—all of whom can look at your work with a practiced eye and shame you if it isn't right. Dov is motivated to produce a high-quality T-shirt at three dollars because that would mean something to Jhean and to Olin and, most of all, to Rick, whose T-shirt graphics are respected around the world. In Gloversville, the market is not an economic mechanism but—and this is the real power of a place like that—a social one.

"Everybody got so technically obsessed with reduced shrinkage," Dov went on, and by "everyone" he meant a group of people you could count on the fingers of one hand. "That was a big mistake for the industry because they took away the natural stretch property of a lot of the jersey. If you look at vintage shirts, they had a lot of stretch. Today, they don't. They are like these print boards. They are practically woven in comparison. I say fuck the shrinkage. I have a theory on width shrinkage on rib: I don't care. In fact, you put it on, it will come back." He was pacing back and forth and talking even more rapidly than usual. "I'm concerned about linear shrinkage. But, if it doesn't have any width shrinkage at all, I become concerned, too. I have a fabric I'm working on with a T-shirt engineer. It keeps having zero width shrinkage. That's not desirable!"

Dov stopped. He had spotted something out of the corner of his eye. It was one of his workers, a young man with a mustache and a goatee and slicked-back hair. He was wearing a black custom T, with two white stripes down the arms. Dov started walking toward him. "Oh, my God. You want to see something?" He reached out and flipped up the tag at the back of the cutter's shirt. "It's a Fresh Jive piece. I made it for Rick five years ago. Somehow this shirt just trickled back here." The sweet serendipity of it all brought a smile to his face.

While Dov was perfecting his baby T's, Rick was holding a fashion shoot for his elegant new women's-wear line, Fresh Jive Domestics, which had been conceived by a young designer named Jessica. The shoot was at Rick's friend Deidre's house, a right-angled, white-stuccoed, shag-rugged modernist masterpiece under the Hollywood sign. Deidre rents it from the drummer of the seventies supergroup Bread. Madonna's old house is several hundred yards to the west of Deidre's place, and Aldous Huxley used to live a few hundred yards in the other direction, with the result that her block functions as a kind of architectural enactment of postwar Los Angeles intellectual life. For Rick's purposes, though, the house's main points of attraction were its fabulous details, like the little white Star Trek seats around the kitchen counter and the white baby grand in the window with the autographed Hugh Hefner photo and the feisty brown-haired spitz-collie named Sage barricaded in the kitchen. Rick had a box of disposable cameras, and as he shot the models other people joined in with the disposables, so that in the end Rick would be able to combine both sets of pictures in a brag book. It made for a slightly chaotic atmosphere—particularly since there were at least seven highly active cell phones in the room, each with a different ring, competing with the hip-hop on the stereo—and in the midst of it all Rick walked over to the baby grand and, with a mischievous look on his face, played the opening chords of Beethoven's "Pathétique" sonata.

Rick was talking about his plans to open a Fresh Jive store in Los Angeles. But he kept saying that it couldn't be on Melrose Avenue, where all the streetwear stores are. "Maybe that would be good for sales," he said. Then he shook his head. "No way."

Deidre, who was lounging next to the baby grand, started laughing. "You know what, Rick?" she said. "I think it's all about a Fresh Jive store without any Fresh Jive stuff in it."

It was a joke, but in some way not a joke, because that's the sort of thing that Rick might actually do. He's terrified by

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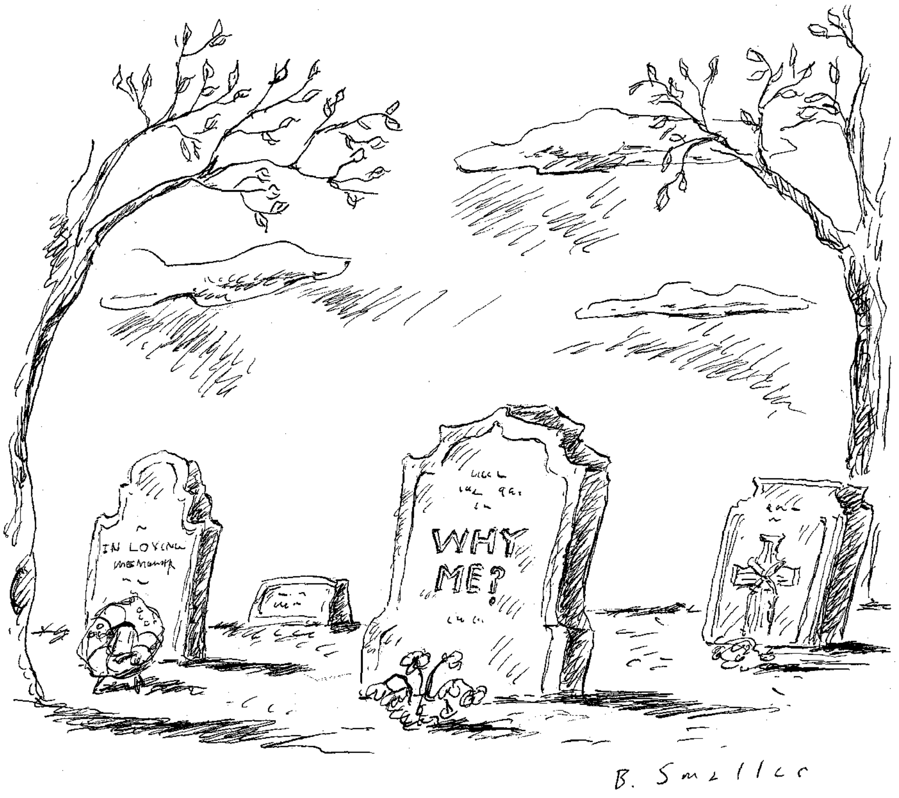
the conventional. At dinner the previous evening, for example, he and Dov had talked about a particular piece—the sports-style V-necked raglan custom T with stripes that Dov had spotted on the cutter. Rick introduced it years ago and then stopped making it when everyone else started making it, too.

"One of our biggest retailers takes me into this room last year," Rick explained. "It's full of custom T-shirts. He said, 'You started this, and everybody else took advantage of it. But you didn't go with it.' He was pissed off at me."

The businessman in Rick knew that he shouldn't have given up on the shirt so quickly, that he could have made a lot more money had he stayed and exploited the custom-T market. But he couldn't do that, because if he had been in that room with all the other custom T's he risked being known in his world as the guy who started the custom-T trend and then ran out of new ideas. Retail chains like J.C. Penney and Millers Outpost sometimes come to Rick and ask if they can carry Fresh Jive, or ask if he will sell them a big run of a popular piece, and he usually says no. He will allow his clothes to appear only in certain street-wear boutiques. His ambition is to grow three times as big as he is now—to maybe a thirty-million-dollar company—but no larger.

This is the sensibility of the artisan, and it isn't supposed to play much of a role anymore. We live in the age of the entrepreneur, who responds rationally to global pressures and customer demands in order to maximize profit. To the extent that we still talk of Gloversville—and the glove-making business there has long since faded away—we talk of it as a place that people need to leave behind. There was Lucius N. Littauer, for example, who, having made his fortune with Littauer Brothers Glove Co., in downtown Gloversville, went on to Congress, became a confidant of Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt, and then put up the money for what is now the Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard University. There was Samuel Goldwyn, the motion-picture magnate, who began his career as a cutter with Gloversville's Elite Glove Co. In 1912, he jumped into the movie business. He went to Hollywood. He rode horses and learned to play tennis and croquet. Like so many immigrant Jews in the movie industry, he enacted through his films a very public process of assimilation. This is the oldest of American stories: the heroic young man who leaves the small town to play on the big stage—who wants to be an entrepreneur, not an artisan. But the truth is that we always get the story wrong. It isn't that Littauer and Goldwyn left Gloversville to find the real culture, because the real culture comes from Gloversville, too; places like Washington and Hollywood persist and renew themselves only because Littauers and Goldwyns arrive from time to time, bringing with them a little piece of the real thing.



"The one paranoia Rick has is that, God forbid, he makes something that another company has," Dov said, at dinner with Rick that night.

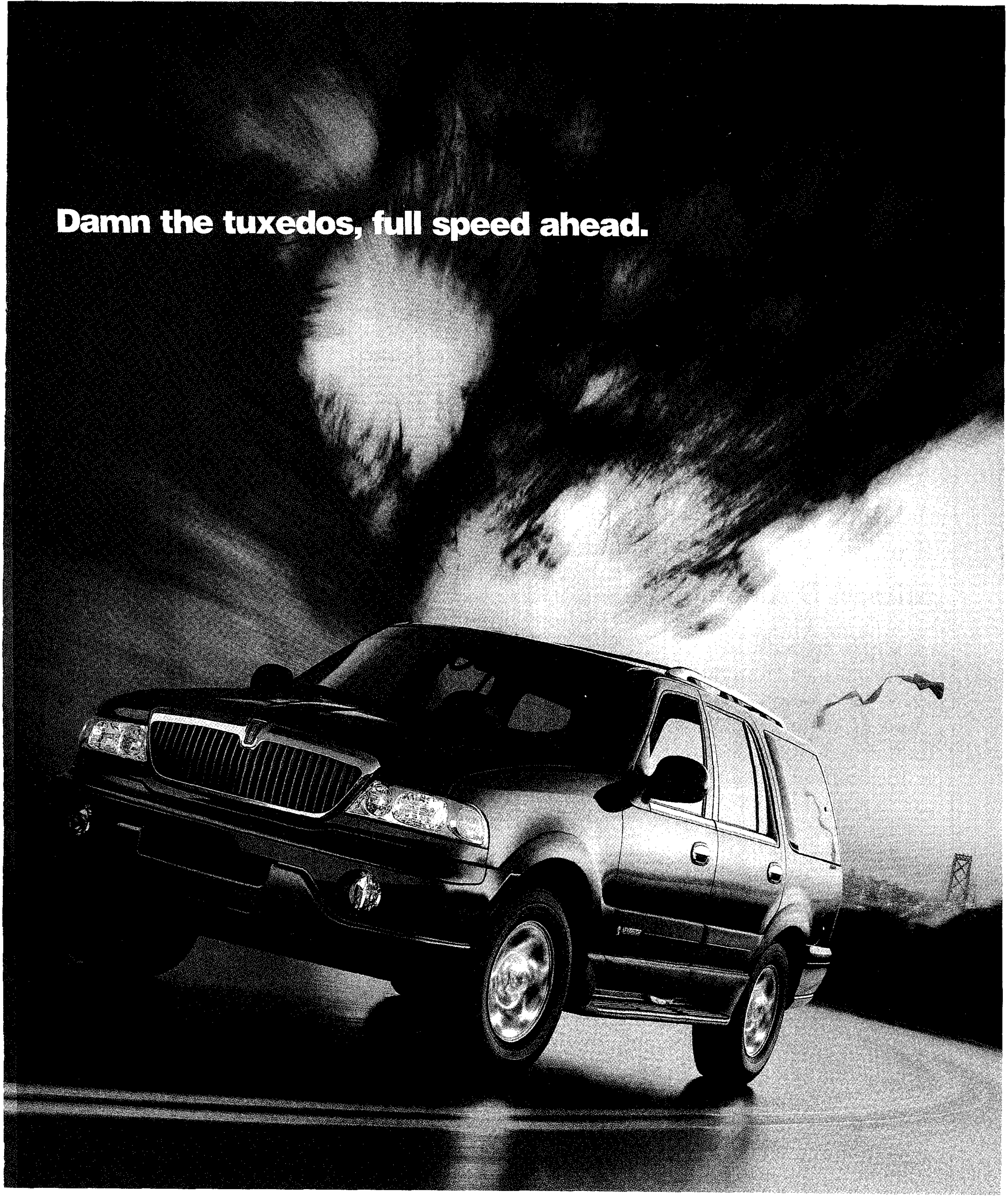
Rick nodded. "In my personal life. Ask Dov. Every piece of clothing I own. Nobody else can have it."

Rick was wearing a pair of jeans and a plain white T-shirt, but if you looked closely you noticed that it wasn't just any jeans-and-T-shirt ensemble. The pants were an unusual denim chino, from Rick's Beggars Banquet collection. And the shirt?

"That is a very well-thought-out item," Dov said, gesturing toward Rick. "It's a purple-label BVD. It's no longer available. Size medium. Of all the shirts I've studied, this one has a phenomenal fit." He reached across the table and ran his fingers around the lower edge of the sleeve. Dov is a believer in a T-shirt that is snug on the biceps. "It's not the greatest fabric. But it shrinks perfectly. I actually gave him that shirt. I came back from one of my customers in New York City, on Grand Street, that happens to resell that particular garment."

It's all of a piece, in the end: the purple-label BVD, the custom-T that he designed but now won't touch. If in Dov's world the true competitive pressures are not economic but social, Rick's version of Gloversville is driven not by the marketplace but by personality—the particular, restless truculence of the sort of person who will give up almost anything and go to any lengths not to be like anyone else.

"We're doing this line of casual shoes," Rick said, during a rare lull in one of Dov's T-shirt soliloquies. "One is the Crip Slip. It's that corduroy slipper that the gang kids would always wear. The other is the Wino, which is that really cheap canvas slipper that you can buy at K mart for seven dollars and that the winos wear when they're, like, really hung over." His big new idea, Rick explained, was to bring out a line of com-



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plementary twelve-inch dolls in those characters. "We could have a guy with baggy pants and a pushcart," he went on. "You know, you pull down his pants and there's skid marks. And we have a full gangster for the Crip Slip."

Rick was so excited about the idea that he was still talking about it the next day at work. He was with a Fresh Jive designer named Jupiter—a skateboarder from Las Vegas of German, Welsh, Irish, French, Chinese, and Spanish extraction—and a guy named Matt, who wore on his chest a gold-plated, diamond-encrusted Star of David the size of a Peppermint Pattie. "The idea is that the doll would pump the shoe, and the shoe would pump the doll," Rick said. "The doll for the Crip Slip would be totally gangster. The handkerchief. The plaid shirt or the wife beater. A forty in his hand. Flashing signs. Wouldn't that be crazy?" And then Rick caught himself. "Omigod. The doll for the Crip Slip will have interchangeable hands, with different gang signs!"

Matt looked awestruck: "Ohhh, that'll be sick!"

"Wooooow." Jupiter dragged the word out, and shook his head slowly. "That's crazy!"

A few days later, Dov drove down to San Diego for Action Sports Retail, a big trade show in the street-wear world. Dov makes the rounds of A.S.R. twice a year, walking up and down through the cavernous conference center, stopping at the booths of hundreds of T-shirt companies and persuading people to buy his shirts wholesale for their lines. This year, he was busy scouting locations for American Apparel's new factory, and so he arrived a day late, clutching a motorized mini-scooter. To his great irritation, he wasn't allowed to carry it in. "This is the most uncool show," he announced, after haggling fruitlessly with the guard at the gate.

But his mood lifted quickly. How could it not? This was A.S.R., and everyone was wearing T-shirts or selling T-shirts, and because this was a place where people knew their T-shirts a lot of those T-shirts were Dov's. He started down one of the aisles. He pointed to a booth on the left. "They use my T-shirts." Next to that booth was another small company. "They use my T-shirts, too." He was wearing khakis and New Balance sneakers and one of his men's T-shirts in baby rib (a controversial piece, because the binding on the collar was a mere half inch). On his back he had a huge orange pack full of catalogues and samples, and every time he spotted a potential customer he would pull the backpack off and rummage through it, and the contents would spill on the floor.

Dov spotted a young woman walking toward him in a baby T. "That's a competitor's shirt. I can tell right away. The spacing of the needle. The fabric is not baby rib." He high-fived someone in another booth. Another young woman, in another T-shirt booth, loomed up ahead. "That's my shirt right there. In the green. I even know the stock number." He turned to her: "You're the girl in the olive forty-three, sixty-six sleeveless V with one-inch binding."

She laughed, but Dov was already off again, plunging back into the fray. "I always have an insecurity that I can be crushed by a bigger business," he said. "Like, Fruit of the Loom decided to do baby T's, and I got a little scared. But then I saw their shirt, and I laughed, because they missed it." Do the suits over at Fruit of the Loom have the same feel for a shirt that Dov does? Were they inspired by Marcella of Argentina and Julie from South Carolina? Those guys were off somewhere in a suburban office park. They weren't in Gloversville. "It was horribly designed," Dov went on. "It was thick, open-end, eighteen-singles coarse rib. It's not the luxury that I offer. See the rib on that collar?" He pulled up the binding on the T-shirt of a friend standing next to him. "Look how thick and spacey it is. That's what they did. They missed the point." Somewhere a cell phone was ringing. A young woman walked past. "Hey!" Dov called out. "That's my T-shirt!" ♦

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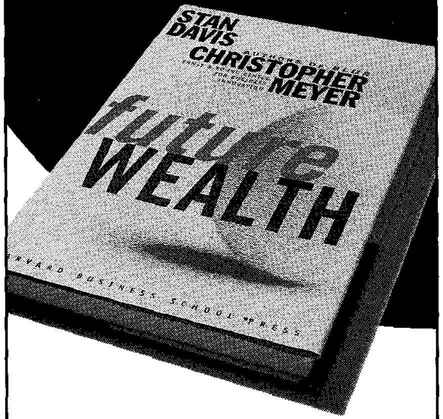

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DAY JOB

Street vender.

I work a coffee-and-doughnut pushcart in lower Manhattan. The day for me starts at 5 A.M. That's when I meet the truck that comes to unload the cart on the street. Usually, the gas is already lit and the water is heating up. I can start making the coffee as soon as the truck leaves. Then, later, another little truck comes around with boxes of pastry.

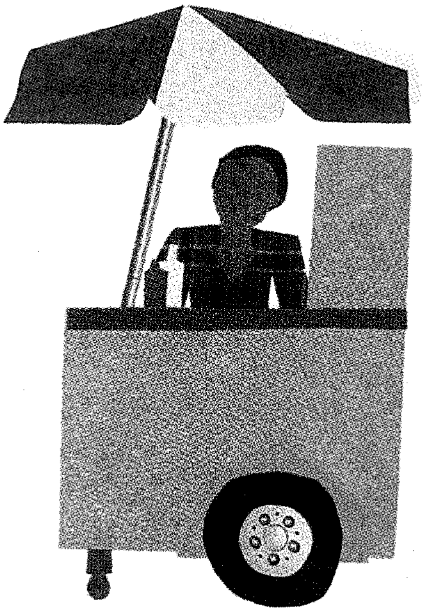
The first customers start trickling in at six. From seven until eleven, it's a big flood of people. I go through about ten or twelve pounds of coffee in a morning. After that slows down, I clean up and then usually sit down on the milk crate. Maybe look at the paper. After the lunch hour people come again, although not like the morning, and then I start closing everything down. About two-thirty or so, the truck comes back and loads up the cart.

Having to deal with the public, it's pretty much constant working. But it's an O.K. living. I would be lucky if I owned my own cart, but the cart licenses are expensive. And it's really hard work. You're out there in the freeze of the winter and the heat of the summer. It's also pretty unsafe doing this. Sometimes you get held up early in the morning. I protected myself with a pot of boiling water one time. A guy showed me something sticking up out of his pocket—it might have been a pipe, I don't know. I had fifteen dollars in my money bag. I wasn't about to give it to this guy. I picked up the bucket of water and heaved it at him. It was wintertime and he had a big army coat on, but he leaped back and took off.

The worst thing is the customers, almost all of whom are appallingly hateful, horrible people. I mostly work Wall Street, and the worst class of people are in the tan raincoats and business suits. The stockbrokers and people who work in the offices are just horrendous.

And they're all very particular about their coffee. You gotta put your little cream in, your sugar, however you make it just so. It makes it a drag to be selling coffee. They stick their heads right into the cart and tell you what to do. I'm always feeling like I want to punch their head back out again. I've gotten to where I can't stand people, especially the yuppies and the businesspeople. I really loathe them, so much so that I can't watch TV, because the male newscasters look just like the customers. You know? They have that haircut. Just the sound, the click and scrape of a briefcase being put down when they go to get their stupid, fat wallet out, makes me cringe. And they make this ugly gesture, reaching in between their legs where their coat is buttoned to pull back their coat and get their wallet, usually out of their front pocket. The women are just as bad, wearing their stupid running shoes with their little female business suits. They are just hateful.

—*Interviewed by Dana Rouse*



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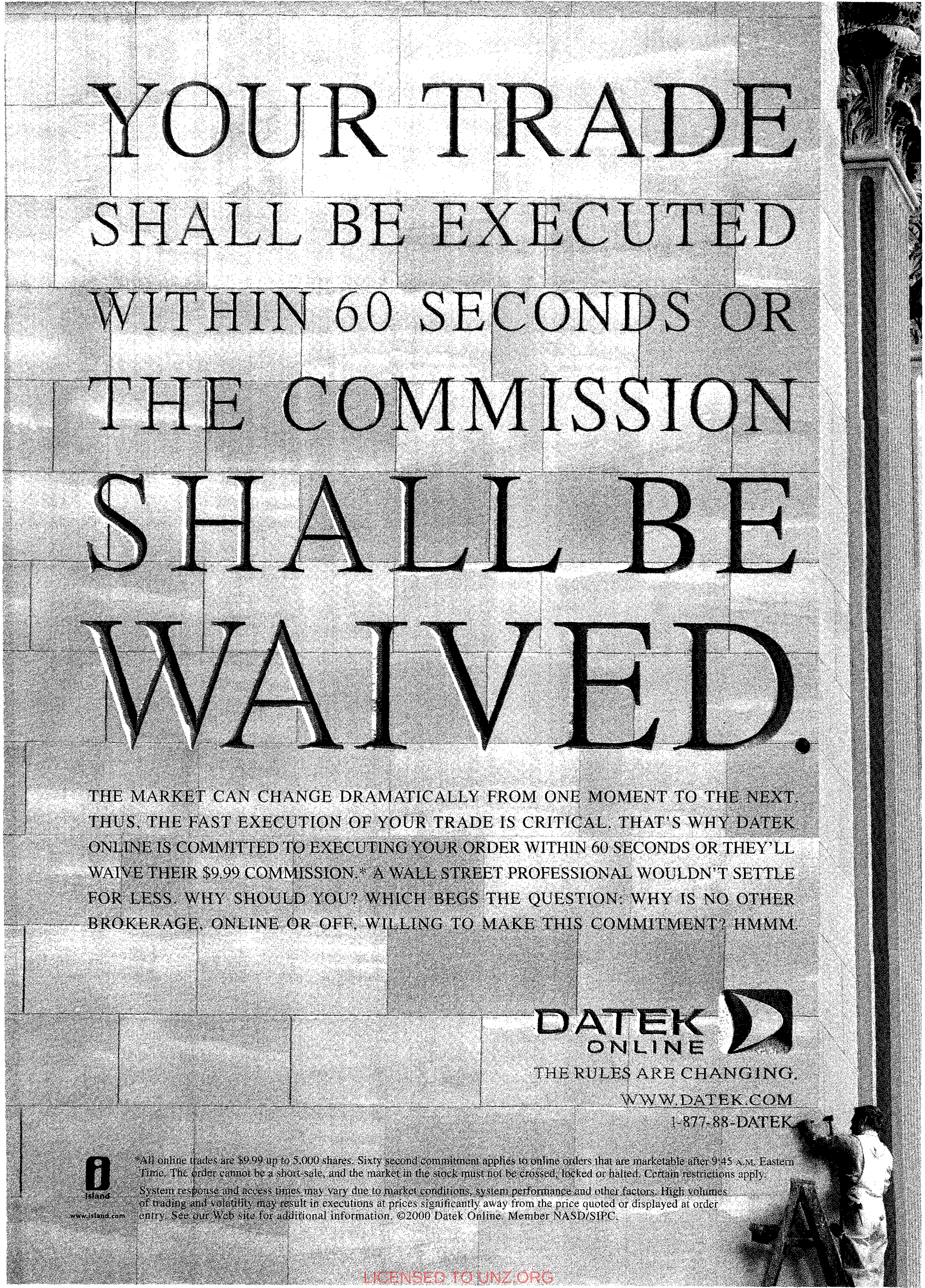

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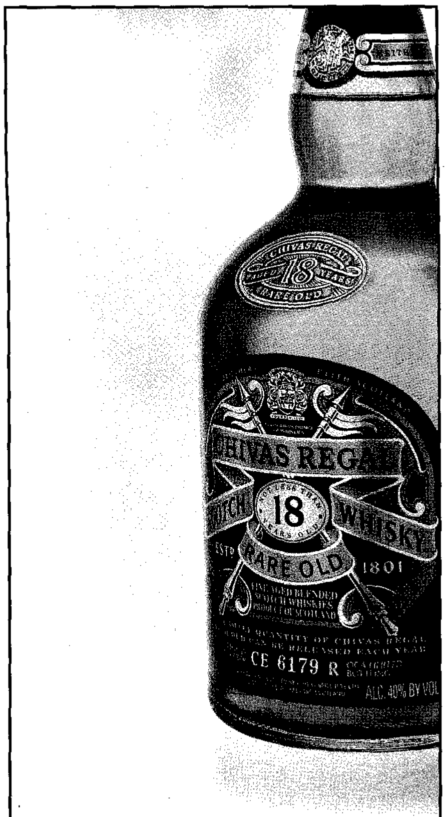

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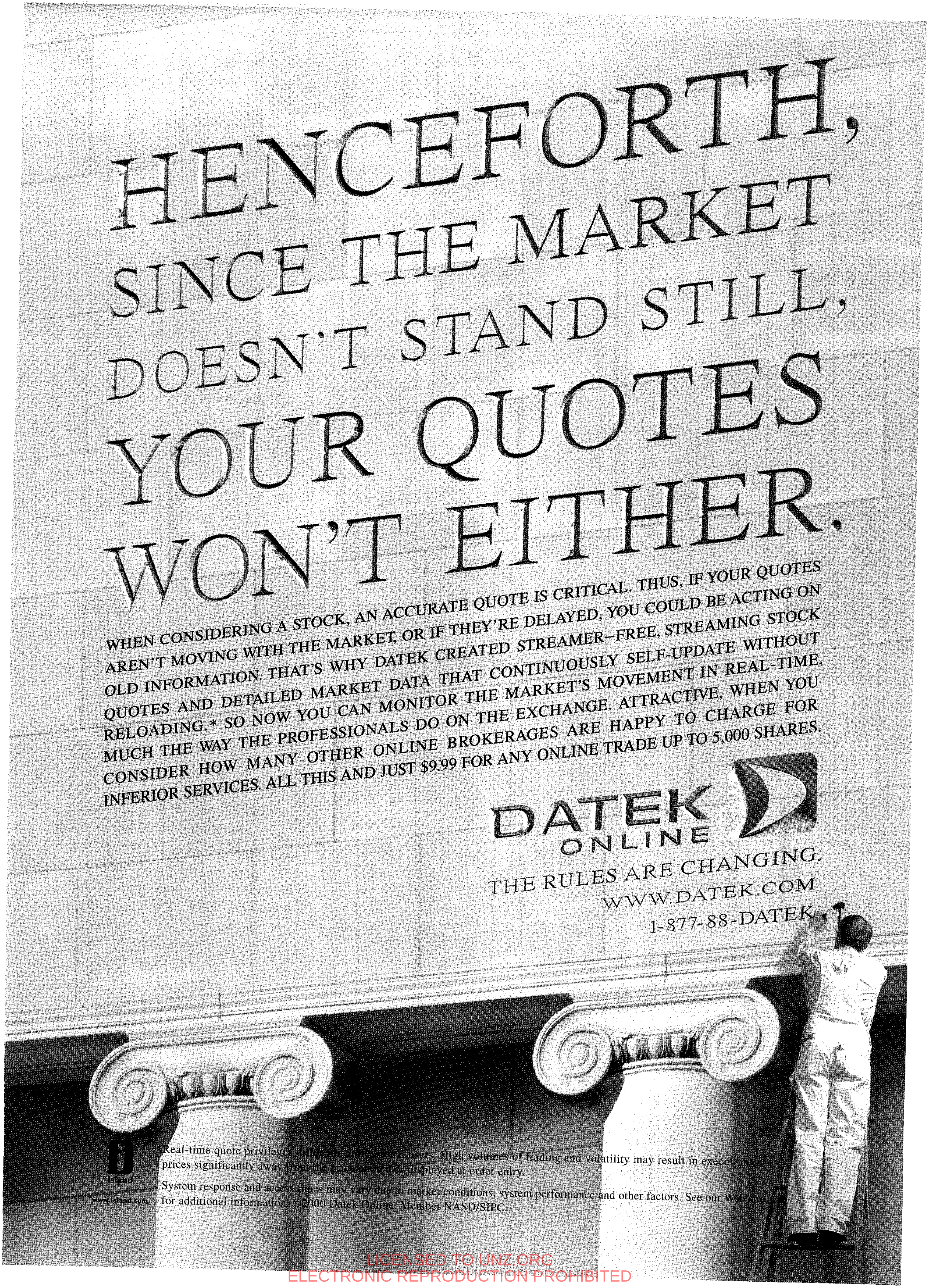
MR. LUCKY

An unexpected story line for a New York performance artist.

BY REBECCA MEAD

A voice like Ethel Merman's and Lotto millions: John Falcon, by Amy Arbus.

On the day last November when John Falcon learned that he had won forty-five million dollars in the New York State lottery, he realized with trepidation that he was finally going to have to do something about his teeth. At the time, Falcon was a struggling performance artist—the creator, director, and star of a one-man autobiographical show entitled "A Short Puerto Rican Guy Sings Songs of Angst," which he has performed at Off Off Broadway theatres over the past several years. In "Short Puerto Rican Guy," Falcon tells the story of his life—his childhood in the Bronx, his coming of age as a gay man in New York in the seventies—through renditions of show tunes and favorite songs by contemporary Broadway composers. Falcon has a powerful tenor voice and an engaging stage presence. Although self-mockery is part of his act—"I have about eleven hours of material," he announces near the beginning of the show. "It's a Puerto Rican 'Nicholas Nickleby' "—he prefers tragedy to comedy. The parts of the show that mean the most to him come when he stands with his legs planted apart and his arms flung wide and his eyes scrunched shut and belts out numbers about heartbreak, loss, loneliness, disappointment, and pain. In order to sing these songs, Falcon draws upon his own reservoirs of disappointment and pain, which are considerable, and which are responsible for the bitter suspicion that the reason he has so far been singing to a crowd of seventy friends at a tiny performance space in



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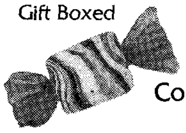

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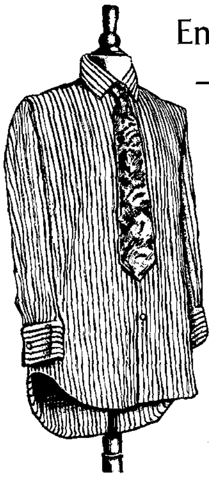

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SoHo, rather than to large, admiring audiences on Broadway, has little to do with his talent and a lot to do with his teeth.

I met Falcon one afternoon in January, when I visited him at his brand-new apartment, on the twenty-fourth floor of a building in the East Fifties, just off Sutton Place. Falcon pays forty-five hundred dollars a month for it, which is thirty-eight hundred and seventy-five dollars more than he was paying for his last apartment, a rent-stabilized one-bedroom in a fourth-floor walkup on East Eighty-second Street. His new home was built in 1983, and has the distinct flavor of the decade. Its two and a half bathrooms are decorated with enough marble for a small mausoleum; in the living room there is one wall of copper-tinted mirrors and there are two walls of floor-to-ceiling windows. Falcon has an unobstructed view of midtown Manhattan, and, to the southeast, he can see River House and some of Queens. Moving into the apartment is one of the biggest changes Falcon has made since he came into his fortune, along with getting himself a private banker, finding someone to write his will, joining a gym, and starting on serious rehearsals for a revival of "Short Puerto Rican Guy." He is also researching dentistry—a dominant theme of his new life.

Falcon speaks of "the teeth" the way another person might refer to "the in-laws," as wearying but inescapable facts of life. The teeth do have their limitations: they are craggy, with gaps and overlaps. Falcon, who is forty-three, also has long black hair, which he usually keeps pulled back in a ponytail but sometimes wears down in a stiff curtain, created with the help of a blow-dryer and a product called Spray It Straight. (One damp night, when Falcon and I were out walking, he caught sight of his shadow on the sidewalk. "Look at the hair!" he gasped. "It's frizzing. If I stay outside too long, I turn into Angela Bassett.") In addition, although he has brown eyes, he wears contact lenses that are tinted a pale-purple color, and give him the aspect of a surprised-looking alien. The hair and the eyes are style choices, but the teeth are an unsought burden. As we stood in his new kitchen, he told me about a producer who, after presenting his show once, failed to include him on subsequent cabaret bills. "She pushed everyone but me, and I think it is because of the way I look," he said. "Every blond-haired, blue-eyed, model-type person, she pushed." He shrugged, and added, "New York has plenty of blond sopranos, but how many short dumpy Puerto Rican guys who can sing like Ethel Merman are there?"

In the past couple of months, Falcon has been laying the groundwork for his personal transformation by interviewing dentists, who have told him that he needs a good year of work, with bridges and caps and implants, all of which will set him back at least a hundred thousand dollars. One day, I asked whether the doctors he'd consulted were proposing to match the color of the new teeth to the color of the old teeth. Falcon looked at me as if I were insane, which is something that he did whenever I asked a certain type of question, such as whether he'd figured out a monthly budget for himself, or whether he thought he'd ever work again. "I told them to forget about matching color," he said. "I want them all brilliant white. I want Matt Lauer teeth. I want to be able to read the news with these teeth."

Although becoming rich has diminished some of the angst in Falcon's life—he no longer has to choose between shoe shopping and paying his utility bills—it has given him a lot of new things to worry about. Among them is the need to figure out what effect being rich will have on his creative work, which until now has been based on his conception of himself as an underdog. One interesting consequence of winning the lottery is that he can no longer use an "I can't afford it" excuse to avoid doing something he'd rather not do, such as have his teeth fixed. Falcon's jackpot will also force him to find out whether fixing the teeth will actually make the difference that he hopes it will—whether money really can buy the happiness and success that he has so far been denied by a hurly-burly world.

As the renewed celebrity of Regis Philbin illustrates, we have begun to live in a windfall society. This was always a country where, the story went, anyone could become wealthy through his own hard work; but the idea that you might luck into wealth, rather than earn it, has started to seem strangely plausible. If all you have to do to become a millionaire is work as an early grunt employee of

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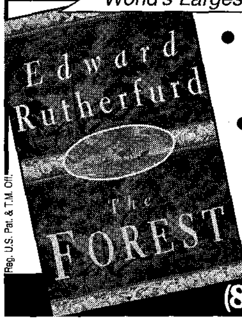

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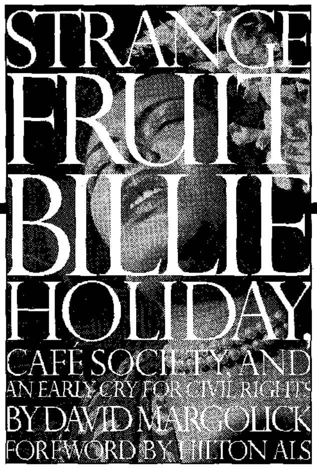

"Strange Fruit"
The Best Song of the Century

"In this sad, shadowy song about lynching in the South, history's greatest jazz singer comes to terms with history itself."
–Time, December 31, 1999

"I have been haunted by the beauty and sadness of David Margolick's devastating biography of the song 'Strange Fruit.'"
–Dominick Dunne

"The one song that can't be defined as a pop song, a jazz piece, or a ballad is 'Strange Fruit.' It defies all labels, but its power is overwhelming. David Margolick captures its meaning, its circumstances, and, of course, the exquisite artist whose hallmark it became: Billie Holiday."
–Studs Terkel

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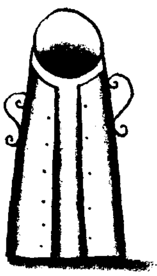
Netscape, or make some fortuitous predictions about an obscure tech stock, then wealth and power aren't reserved for the wealthy and powerful anymore.

Falcon found out that he was worth forty-five million dollars on November 1st, at around five in the afternoon, when he was about to leave the offices of the publisher Harcourt Brace, where he had worked for the previous two years as a software formatter, making sure that blocks of text fit onto the page. Before shutting down his Mac for the night, he checked the Lotto results on the Internet, having bought a ticket a few days earlier. He had been playing the same numbers—his addresses over the years, strung together—every week for two and a half years, and when he saw the winning formula he recognized it instantly. "I just kind of sat down in my chair, and I called my boss, Laurie, and I said, 'Laurie, take a look at this.' Laurie knows that I am a bit of a hacker, so she said, 'How did you do that?' I said, 'No, this is real, this is Yahoo!' " Falcon had no idea what he was supposed to do next, so his boss suggested that he call the lottery office downtown. "I said, 'Hi, how do I redeem a ticket?' The guy told me to come down to the office, and they'd give me the money. I said, 'Well, I think I have won the forty-five-million-dollar Lotto.' He said there was a five-digit number on the side of the ticket, and I read him the number, and he said it was the winning ticket. I asked how many people had won, and he said, 'One.' It was like someone punched me in the stomach."

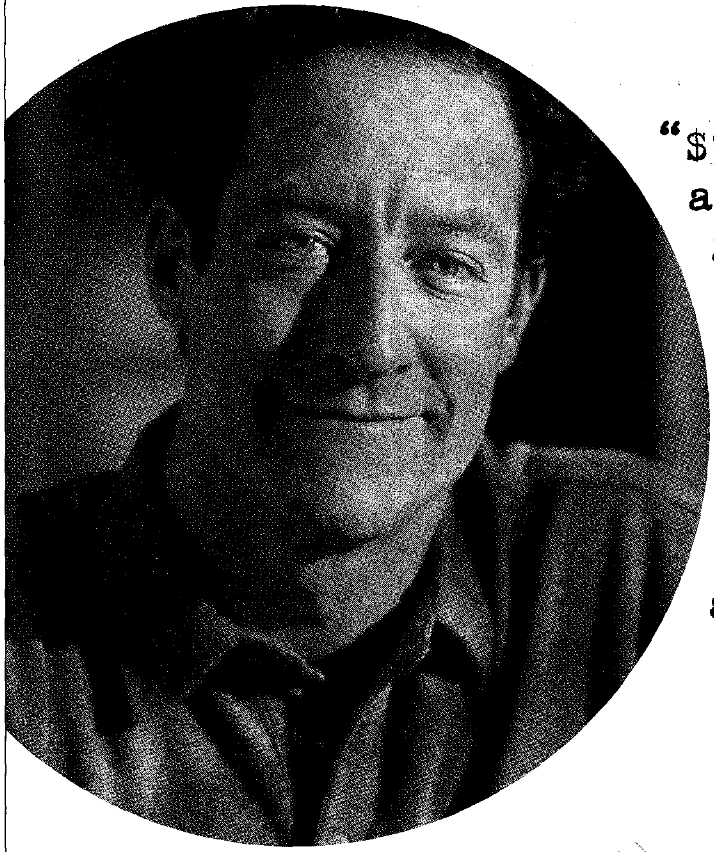


With Falcon's fortune has come a measure of celebrity, which he seems to enjoy, though he has kept the attention of certain media at bay, declining appearances on German television, Jerry Springer, and Montel Williams. Two weeks after he learned that he had won, the lottery agency held a press conference to announce his good fortune, and that landed him on the front page of both the *News* and the *Post*. Local television stations gave him good play, not just because of the size of his prize but because he was such a ham at the press conference. (When he was asked about the first thing he bought after winning, he adopted a puzzled expression and said, "Milk?") Falcon is recognized frequently when he is out and about in New York, and most of the attention is good-natured. One day, we were trying to hail a cab on First Avenue, near his building, and the driver of a beat-up, low-riding automobile rolled down his window and shouted, "Can't you afford a limousine?"

Falcon will receive his money in installments over the next twenty-five years. In 1999, he got a million one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, of which about seven hundred thousand was left after taxes. He has put most of that money into Treasury bills, although he plans to do some more thoughtful investing with the help of a financial adviser recommended by a friend. Falcon has hired another old friend to come to his apartment every couple of weeks to catalogue his receipts and pay his bills, and that's just as well, because Falcon's system—which is to throw every bit of paper relating to finances into a file box and then hide the box in a closet—is unlikely to satisfy the I.R.S. should its representatives ever audit him.

There are people who insist, after coming into an unexpected fortune, that their lives won't change dramatically, but John Falcon is not one of those people. After winning the lottery, he never returned to his office, and declined a week or two later to help out his boss, who was short-staffed, when she called to ask if he would cover for her. ("I said, 'Are you crazy! I'm never getting up that early again!' ") He travels on public transportation less frequently now, Sutton Place being shockingly ill-served by the M.T.A. He has an unlisted phone number, although at his old, listed number he still gets messages from cold-calling investment advisers and from young women who, cooing into his answering machine, say that he once gave them his phone number but that they never got around to calling until now. (For example: "If this is you, Mr. Lucky, I just want to congratulate you. I just want to talk to you. I don't need anything. I just think you are outrageous.")

Falcon has been devoting many of his waking hours to shopping. The first luxury item he bought was a half-pound of Danish Lurpak butter ($3.99), and that was soon followed by the order of



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a glass chair from the Pace Collection, for five thousand five hundred dollars. The glass chair, with its intimations of Cinderella, has been the focus of some consternation among Falcon's family and friends. When I talked about the chair with his mother, Rose, a forceful sixty-eight-year-old woman who was a schoolteacher in the South Bronx and now lives in Orlando, with Falcon's father, a retired metallurgist, she shrieked, "This monstrosity! I thought he was really traditional, all mahogany. When he calms down, he is going to be into the mahogany again."

Falcon has distinctive decorating tastes. In his old apartment, which was dark and cluttered, he went for a rococo look, with swag curtains over an airshaft window, gold-painted plaster cherubs on the walls, and homemade floral couch cushions edged with fringe. In the new apartment, however, Falcon says he is striving for an Art Deco, Gershwinesque aesthetic, and so far he has invested in a fair amount of glass and chrome. He bought a chrome dustpan and brush. He bought an enormous chrome salad spinner. He bought what he thought was a chrome kitchen clock from a shopping Web site, only to discover that it is made of chrome-colored plastic. He plans to rent a baby-grand piano for the living room, and when I went to the apartment one recent afternoon he had a borrowed cutout of the instrument laid on the floor, to demonstrate how much room it would take up. I stood where the piano stool would be, and remarked that he would have an amazing view over midtown while he played, but he gave me that "Are you insane?" look and said, "Oh, I can't play."

Although he can now afford to shop anywhere, Falcon has not entirely lost the habits of frugality. Even the glass chair was on sale, reduced from eleven thousand dollars. Friends have been encouraging him to think more like a millionaire—"I am hoping he has his hair blown out once a week now, instead of once a month," his friend Judy Karasik said to me—but Falcon resists such suggestions. "Most people want me to behave differently," he told me. "Most people want me to go out and buy a Ferrari. People push what they would do themselves onto me."

One morning in January, I went shopping in SoHo with Falcon and a friend of his, a woman named Thayer Hochberg, whom he met at a singing workshop almost ten years ago. Falcon said that he wanted Hochberg's opinion because she had good taste, but it seemed that what he really wanted was someone to disagree with. We started in Portico, where Falcon had his eye on a large overstuffed couch in a beige damask which cost just over four thousand dollars.

"I want something very gushy," he said.

Hochberg looked unconvinced. "It's eight feet long," she said, skeptically. "And it's beige. You don't like beige."

"I don't like *wearing* beige," Falcon corrected her. He threw himself on the cushions, and said, "I couldn't sit on this naked, though. It would chafe, and I would get rashes."

We left Portico empty-handed, and

*Optional †Always wear your safety belt and secure children in the rear seat.

stopped off at Aero, a little farther along Spring Street, where Falcon flirted with the idea of buying a chrome-and-glass magazine rack that was priced at seven hundred and fifty dollars, but moved on when he offered five hundred dollars and was rejected. An Art Deco sign outside the Lin/Weinberg gallery, on Wooster Street, caught Falcon's eye, and we went in and found an Edward Wormley sofa from 1953, which had clean modern lines and was covered in pearl-gray wool. It cost twelve thousand five hundred dollars, and Hochberg loved it. It seemed to make Falcon uncomfortable.

"I was thinking of something much more tasselled," he said.

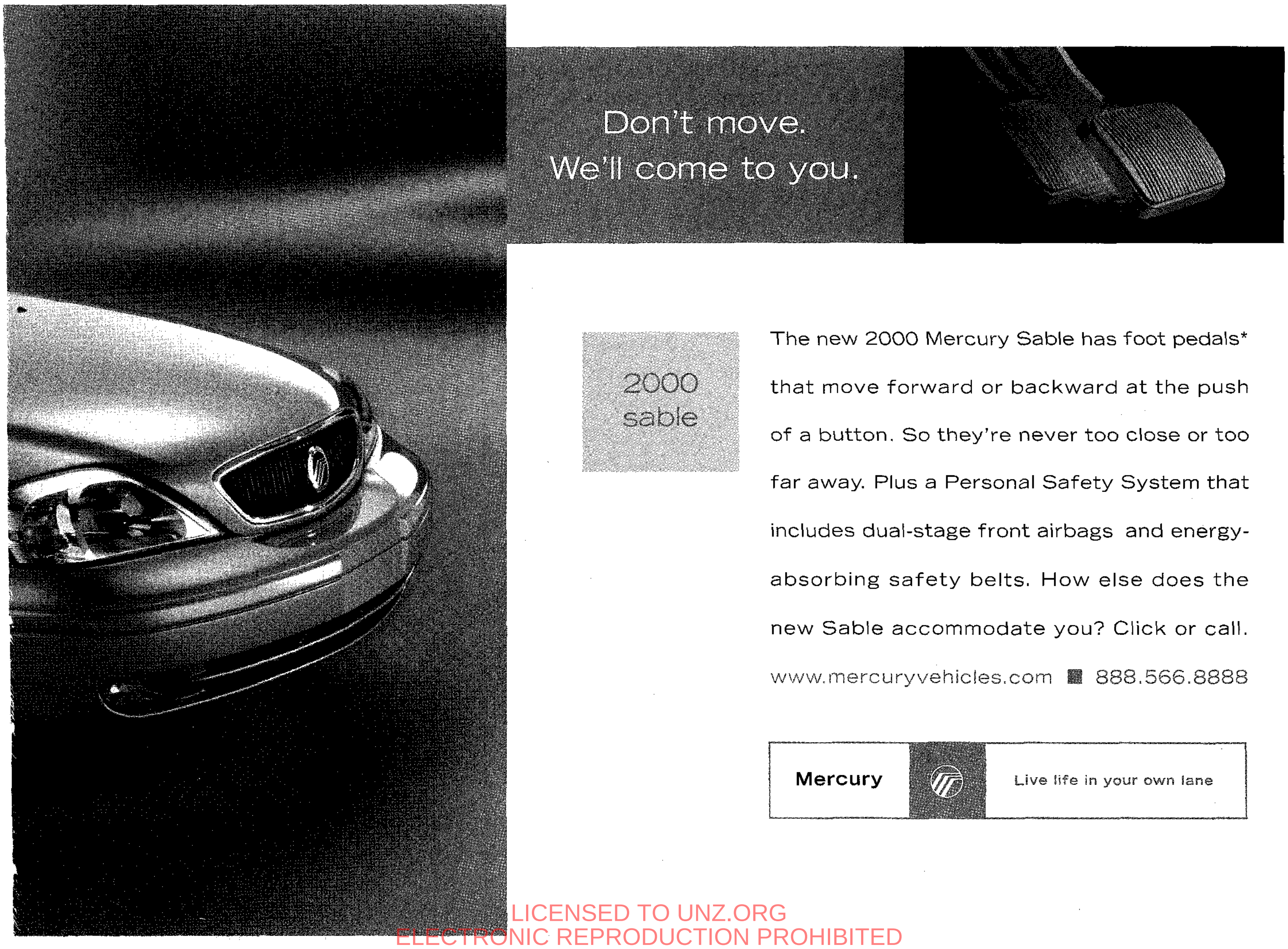
"Think dark-fuchsia cushions," she said.

"Think twelve thousand dollars," he said.

Shortly after Falcon and I met, we flew to London together for a three-day weekend. We went to see a new West End musical called "Spend Spend Spend," based on the true story of Viv Nicholson, a factory worker from a poor mining village in Yorkshire, who, in 1961, won a hundred and fifty-two thousand pounds, the largest-ever fortune in the British equivalent of the lottery, only to squander it all within three years. (She told the newspapers at the time that she intended to "spend and spend and spend.") Falcon wanted to see the show, he said, "so that I can learn what not to do," but it was clear from the moment we started making travel plans that he didn't need any lessons from Viv Nicholson.

He decided that we would fly in the cheapest coach seats available. "Why should I spend another thousand dollars on a business-class ticket?" he said. "I could buy a glass magazine rack for that." We flew from Kennedy on a Thursday night, on Virgin Atlantic. The plane was full, and we were squeezed into a pair of seats at the back of a cabin, right next to the toilet. Falcon was delighted with a free translucent plastic backpack, which contained earplugs and an eye shield and a miniature toothbrush. He hoarded the cheese and crackers from his meal, "for the dark hours."

In London, I found myself assuming the role previously played by Falcon's friends: the travelling companion who can't believe the incredible cheapness of the millionaire at her side. Falcon had selected the Cranley Gardens Hotel, which he'd stayed in before, and which cost just seventy-nine pounds a night. It has a handsomely decorated lobby, with dark wood and high, elegant ceilings, but our rooms were tiny, and painted an institutional pink—"Am I here for an abortion?" Falcon said, throwing his bag onto the twin bed. Having checked in, we headed for the West End. Falcon wanted to see the new Andrew Lloyd Webber, and we went to the half-price ticket booth on Leicester Square. In Soho, we stopped off at a branch of an inexpensive chain store called Cecil G's. Falcon had spotted a rack of discounted leather jackets, down to ninety-nine pounds, from about three hundred. He tried one on, and it was a



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bad fit—too long in the sleeves, too tight around the hips. Even so, he stood in front of the mirror for a while, tempted. I asked how the leather felt, and he fixed me with his purple eyes and said, “Like a really good Naugahyde.”

On one of our three days in England, we went to Stonehenge, at Falcon’s suggestion, since he is a student of astrology. For our excursion, we joined a busload of Japanese tourists, mostly college-age women. En route, the bus drove through Belgravia, where the tour guide announced, “This land is all owned by the Duke of Westminster. He’s a very rich man. In fact, he is a millionaire.” At this, Falcon gazed out the window and smiled to himself.

When we got to Stonehenge, it looked, with its standing stones and its fallen stones and its fragmented stones, rather like a mouthful of teeth in need of dentistry, and, after wandering around for an hour or so, we and the Japanese went on to Bath, to visit the Roman ruins. We walked from what was once a swimming pool to what was once a cold plunging pool and on to what was once an exercise courtyard. “It’s a bit like Crunch,” Falcon said. Then we stopped off at the eighteenth-century Pump Room, and Falcon admired the décor, stroking a curtain and saying, “Do you have any idea how much this fringe would cost in New York City?”

On Saturday evening, we went to see “Spend Spend Spend,” at the Piccadilly Theatre. Falcon settled into his seat and flicked through the program, which told the story of how Viv Nicholson and her husband had won what today would be the equivalent of almost five million dollars. In the first scene, we saw the present-day Viv, working as a hairdresser in her home town and being berated by one of her customers—“You silly cow!”—for having squandered so much money. I thought I could feel Falcon flinch in the seat next to me. Then we flashed back to the nineteen-sixties, and saw the young Viv—sexy and cheeky and vivacious—buying champagne and a fur stole and a new house and dancing on the tables with joy. As the show progressed, however, things turned sour: Viv’s friends and family tried to exploit her; she and her husband spent more and more time drinking and fighting; then her husband was killed in a car crash. Viv’s heart was broken, and in quick succession she married three gold-digging men who beat her or bored her, or both. She went broke and eventually returned to the same meagre life she’d begun with.

As we left the theatre, I asked Falcon whether he’d experienced the same frenzy of excitement as Viv had when he discovered he’d won. “The first month was a blur,” he said. “I literally didn’t sleep for two weeks. When I thought about it, I got dizzy. I didn’t tell anyone. I didn’t tell my mother. It was too mind-boggling. It still is. I am still waiting for someone to knock on the door to my new apartment and say, ‘You’re going to have to go, because that check bounced.’ Maybe that’s why I am so afraid to spend it. When I was a kid, we moved from the South Bronx to Wilson Avenue, in the North Bronx, and I had dreams that I would have to leave there and go back to the South Bronx. This is almost like the same thing: I keep thinking they’re going to tell me that I have to go back to my old apartment.”

“This is my friend Ted, and this is Ted’s lower-priced knockoff.”

Until last November, when the first check came from the Lotto people, Falcon did not have a checking account, or a bank account of any sort, and he conducted all his financial affairs with the help of a check-cashing joint at Tenth Avenue and Fifty-eighth Street. He owed money to so many creditors that he was afraid any account he opened would be garnisheed. Describing his pre-Lotto self, Falcon referred to an article that appeared in the *Village Voice* a few years back, called “The Privileged Poor.” “They had great wardrobes, they managed to get into all the best restaurants, they went to the theatre, and they had no money,” he explained to me one day. “Once you paid your phone bill and the cable, you had three months before you had to pay the rest. In the old apartment, I always thought they were going to turn off my electricity.” There have been different reactions among Falcon’s friends to his sudden change in status: one of his best friends has become cool and aloof, but another friend, an artist named Maria Yoon, who is even more impoverished than Falcon was, says that his winning the lottery is the best thing that ever happened to her because he said he’d give her his old computer.

Falcon’s mother says that her son was “born to be a millionaire. He even looks like a millionaire. He walked like a millionaire, that kid. He was born into a poor family, but that was a mistake.” In spite of such predestination, it was not clear, until last November, just how Falcon would come into his birthright, because above all he seemed to have a talent for being broke. He always had an artistic streak,

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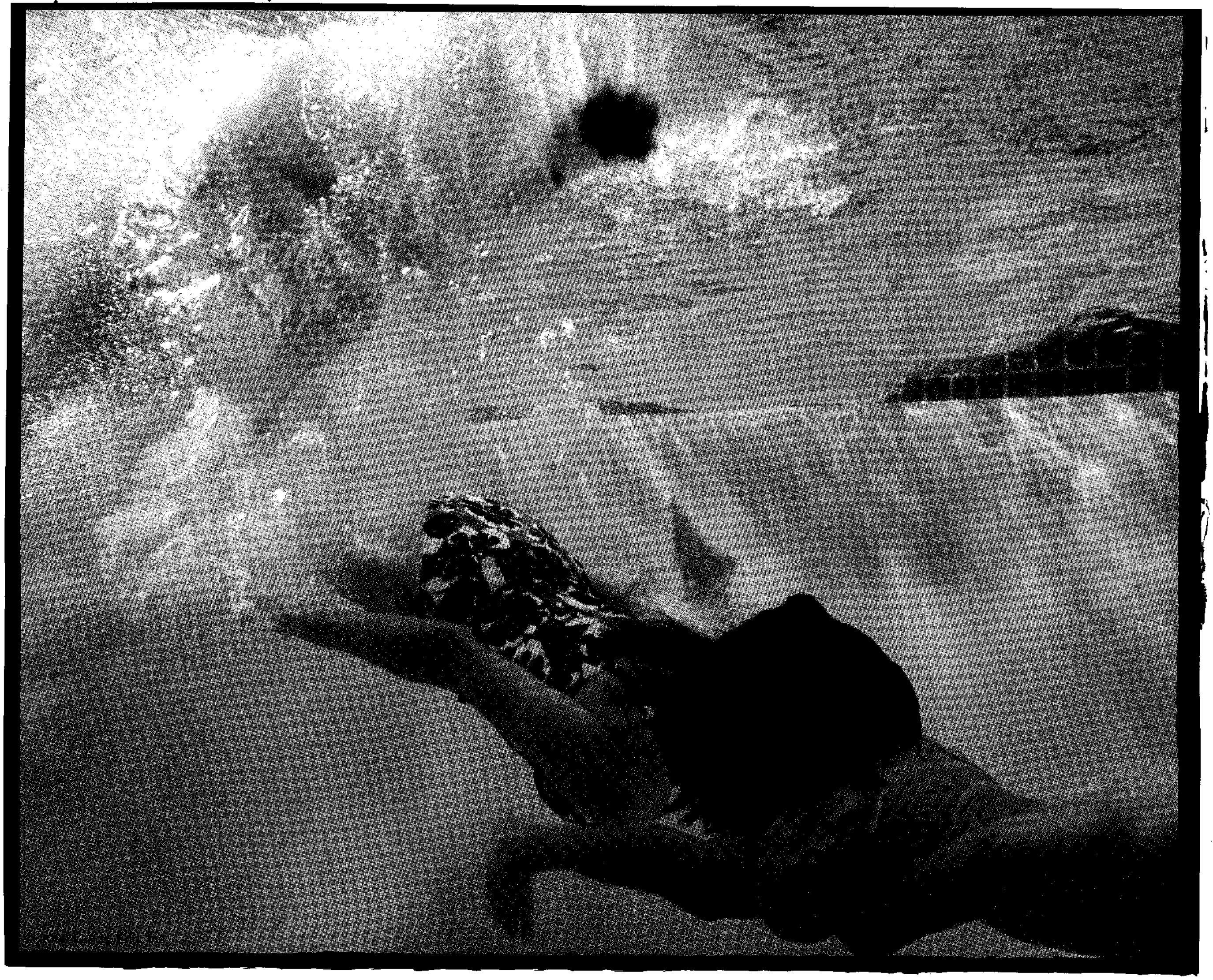

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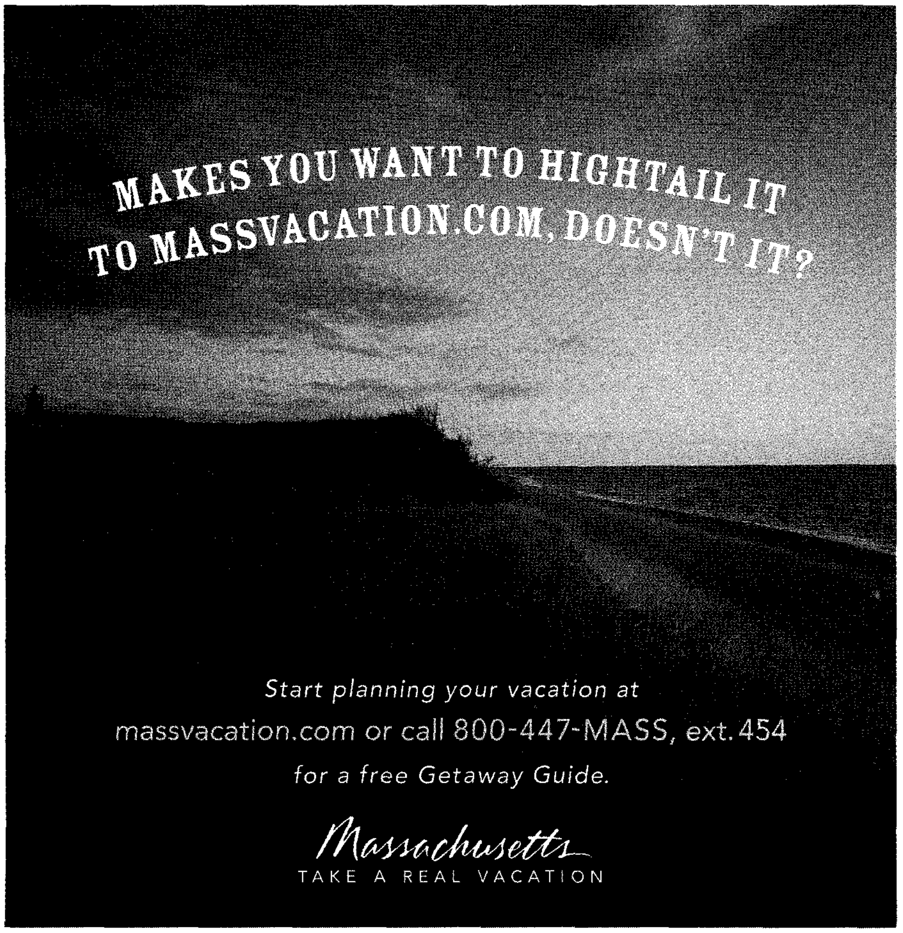
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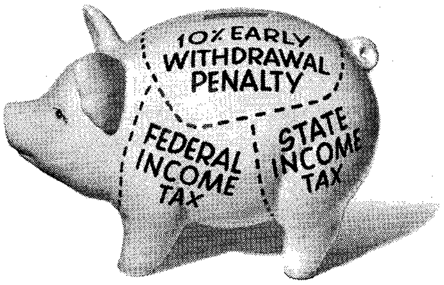

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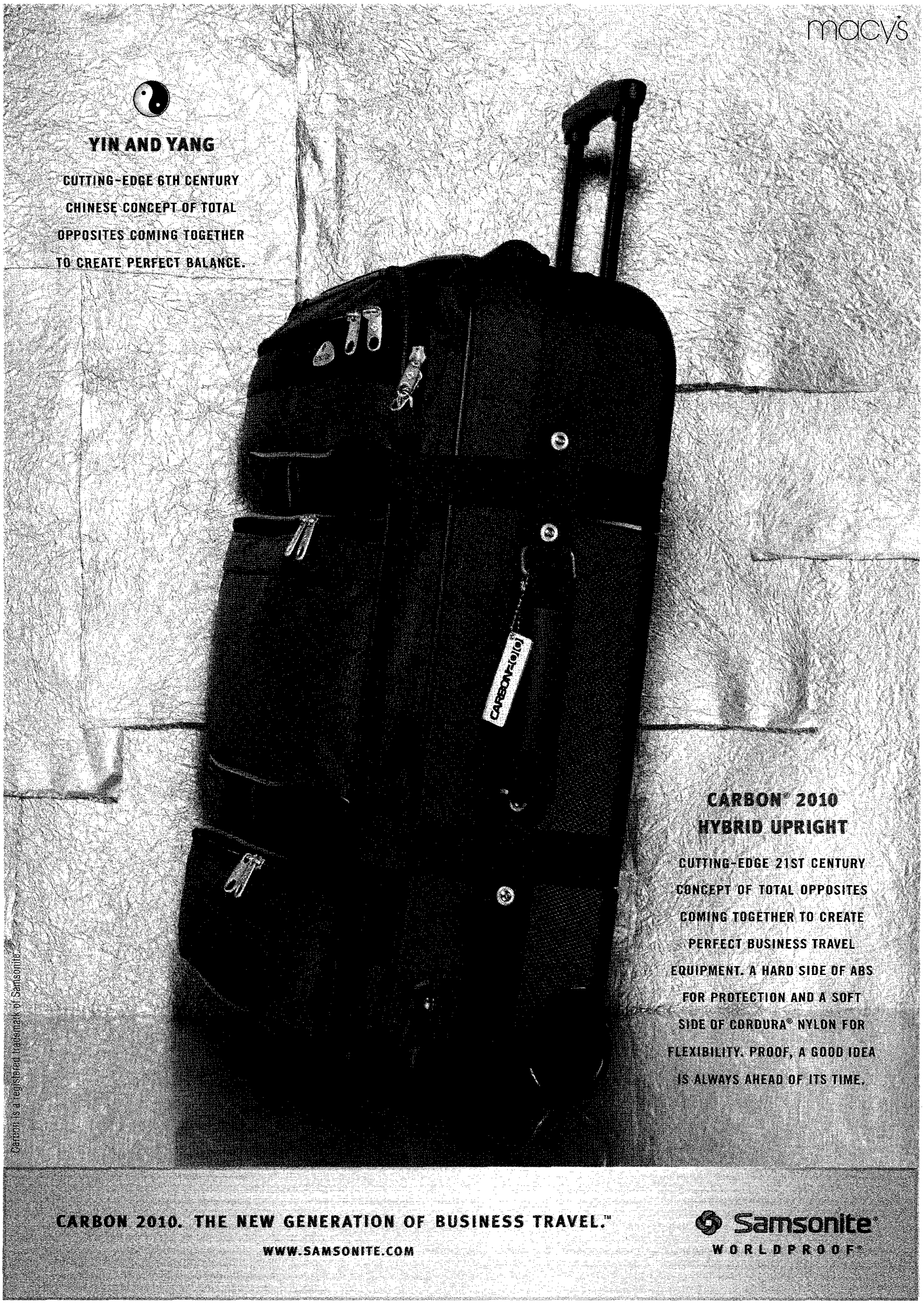
and attended the High School of Art and Design, in Manhattan, where he studied fashion design. He demonstrated a leaning toward the performing arts by singing "People (Who Need People)" at Carnegie Hall on graduation day. He briefly attended F.I.T., and then embarked upon a twenty-odd-year career of short-term jobs. He quit most of them after fighting with a boss. Falcon appears to have worked at every department store in Manhattan, and also at every museum, and a catalogue of his experiences reads like Dilbert as revenge tragedy. He left MOMA: "I hated the people." He left the Whitney: "I wanted to go to London." He left the Met: "They asked me to vacuum. I said, 'I don't even vacuum my own house.' " At the Jewish Museum, he left after declining to apologize for telling one of his co-workers that she needed to go into therapy. Although his parents bailed him out numerous times, a couple of years ago his mother gave him an ultimatum, which prompted him to take the Harcourt Brace job. She told me, "I said, 'Hey, sucker, you have got to work. I'm not going to keep paying your rent.' " (As partial recompense, Falcon gave his mother a ten-thousand-dollar check for Christmas, and is sending her to a weight-loss spa for a month, at a cost of sixteen thousand dollars. He gave his father and his sister, Debbie Coll, who lives in Orlando, each ten thousand dollars, too, and has established college funds for a niece and nephew.)

Besides being somewhat feckless, Falcon has, over the years, suffered some very bad luck. In the middle and late eighties, he and his boyfriend ran a collectibles shop on the Upper East Side called the Book and Chotchka. The relationship ended unhappily in 1989, and as a consequence the business closed down and Falcon was left penniless. Not long afterward, he was the victim of a vicious gay-bashing attack, which he still has trouble discussing. "For that, we are going to need major, copious amounts of alcohol and a psychiatrist," he said when I raised the subject. He was set upon by a group of youths while walking in his neighborhood late at night, and ended up in Bellevue with a smashed jaw. His jaw is now augmented by two metal plates, and the messed-up teeth are a legacy of this period. After the attack, he says, "it took me a year to be able to walk



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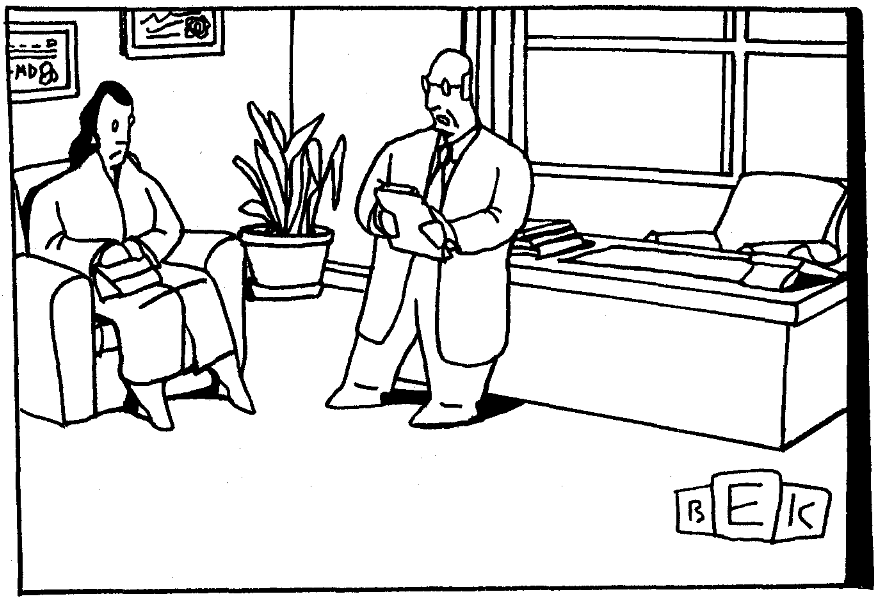


"Well, as we thought, it's something gross."

• •

out of the house without being afraid."

Falcon hasn't had a long-term relationship since that time, which seems to be just the way he wants it. "I am very happy where I am right now," he told me. "After my last relationship ended, and the attack, I had to learn to be by myself for the first time. I am very protective of that now, and I like being in charge of my destiny. I am not going to give that up without a fight. Any new person would have to convince me to give up closet space."

I pointed out that Falcon has a lot more closet space these days.

"It's true," he agreed. "It was a funnier line in the old apartment."

In "A Short Puerto Rican Guy Sings Songs of Angst," Falcon includes a jazzy comic song called "My Simple Wish." One day, he showed me a grainy video of his show, taped in September of 1998 at Here Performance Space, and the song brought the house down. That's partly because the lyrics, by David Friedman, are witty. The song begins with the words "I wanna be/Rich, famous and powerful/Step on all my enemies/and never do a thing/I wanna be/Rich, famous and powerful/so all I have to do at night/is sit around and sing," and concludes:

If we were
Rich, famous and powerful
We could
Take all those agents
and casting directors
tiny apartments
and back tax collectors
Critics and casting calls
Chilly rehearsal halls
People who bore us
and jobs in the chorus
and kiss them all
good
bye!

Falcon did a good job of personifying artistic petulance, strutting around the stage and tossing his hair. But the audience members, as they sat in the bare-bones theatre, were doubtless also laughing at the patent improbability of the wealth-and-celebrity scenario befalling Falcon. For every John Leguizamo and Claudia Shear, performers whose autobiographical shows break out because of some spark of conceptual originality, New York has thousands more whose chances of hitting it big are minimal. The odds that John Falcon would win forty-five million dollars in the lottery were a little more than eighteen million to one; but the odds of his becoming rich, famous, and powerful the other way were probably smaller still.

Now, of course, he can bankroll himself. Early next year, he intends to rent a theatre for a new production of "Short Puerto Rican Guy"; he'll hire a band to back him and will have a big advertising budget. He'd also like to record a CD. Ultimately, he hopes to start a non-profit theatre company, and he also dreams of having his own room in which to perform, "like Bobby Short sings at the Carlyle for three months a year, and then he goes to France."

One afternoon, when Falcon and I were riding in a cab through his old neighborhood of tenements and dry cleaners, I remembered something that he had said about the time he was attacked: because the assault had come during a spate of bias crimes in the city, the local newspapers were interested in Falcon's story, and he was invited to appear on talk shows. He'd deflected most of the attention. "It wasn't going to be my fifteen minutes of fame," he had told me.

Now that Falcon has been granted another chance at notoriety, I wondered whether he regretted that once again his fame was due not to his talent but to his luck. Not at all, he said. "But back then I was a victim," he explained. "Now I am like a winner, or something. It's a bit more positive." But, I asked, wouldn't people be interested in him because of the peculiarity of his situation, rather than the singularity of his talent? "Yes, but that's fine," he said. "If they come to my show, and they like what they see, then *that* is my talent."

Paradoxically, winning the lottery has presented him with something of a creative stumbling block. Falcon's ambitions for "Short Puerto Rican Guy" are considerable. In it, he told me, he has tried to address sweeping themes of love and loss: "Here we are, together on earth, experiencing these emotions, let's share this," as he put it. He now has to integrate his new fortune into the show because it is a big part of his life story, and he's not sure how to go about it. "I think winning the Lotto is too phantasmagorical ever to be really personal," he said. "It is something that people want to have happen to them, but they really have no idea. You fall in love; you get jilted—everyone knows what that is like. But the Lotto thing—no one can relate to it, really. They all think they know, but they don't. And it's hard to find a song already written that applies."

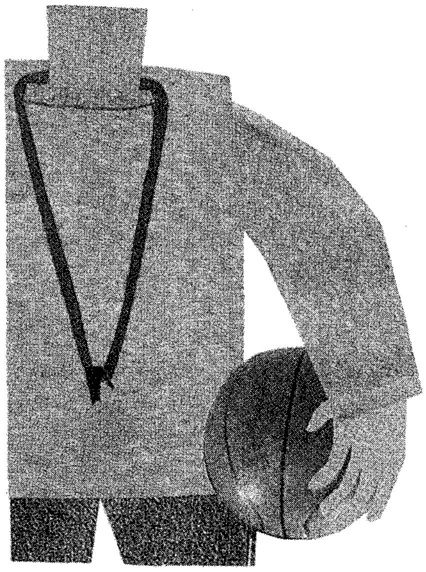
So Falcon is in a curious predicament: the fortune that will enable him to devote himself full-time to his art also undermines his vision of the kind of artist that he wants to be. He's been dealt an extraordinary story line, when what he'd like is an ordinary one. Of course, as problems go, it's not a bad one to have; and just as soon as his teeth are fixed he'll be able to give it some serious thought. ♦

DAY JOB

High-school basketball coach.

I went to high school in this area, a typical small-town suburb. Played four years of basketball and finished as my school's all-time leading scorer. And I did real well in college—I mean, my coach talked to me about trying to play in Europe, but I didn't want to go over there. It's funny, but I just always wanted to coach. Growing up, I looked at my coaches and thought, you know, I want to be just like that.

My first year, we had the school's best record in four years. But we didn't make the Jamboree, which is the county tournament. And I was like, you know, Fuck this. We're a Catholic school—we can go and get whoever we want, there's no reason we should ever be bad. So this year I went out and got a kid, from, let's say, Finland, who is friggin' real good. Six-foot-two guard. And he really made an impact. We won a county-tournament game for the first time in the history of the school. And I won Coach of the Year for the league.



STEPHEN KRONINGER

I knew the kid from a basketball camp that I worked at in the summer. He shoots threes from, like, thirty feet. I struck up a friendship with him. I'd call him at home in Finland, and I'd say, "You should really come over here if you want to play college basketball." Then, you know, I had to find someplace for him to live. So I went to one of my assistant coaches and said, "You gotta fuckin' just take this kid and tell your wife to just be quiet and don't worry about it—he's moving in with you."

We wrote a letter to the state saying that the kid's over here staying with a family friend for academics, and he's gonna play all these sports and this and that. And the state called and they asked one question: "Who pays for him to go to school?" And we said the parents pay. But we have an alumni guy that's paying for him, so the alumni guy just paid with money orders, and we signed the parents' names on the bottom of the money order. And it worked.

The one thing is—and this is a pain in the ass—because it's such a different culture, he's always homesick, and when he's homesick I'm the first person he goes to. And it's, like, sometimes I'll be getting ready to go somewhere, and he'll call: "Oh, Coach—I am missing home." And I'm like, Ah, shit. Half-hour conversation, and I'm gonna be late.

I brought this other kid on, too, last year, a forward, from somewhere like Philly. The other players were fine with it, because they just want to be awesome. I don't know how the parents reacted. Parents are fucked up. They are! Because, like—everyone thinks their son is an All-American, right? Actually, one set of parents did complain about the ringers. Their son got benched this past year. I was just, like, "Well, things happen." But I should've said, "Tell your son to make a jump shot and I wouldn't have to bring these kids from Finland!"

I'm recruiting all the time. That's probably why I fucking don't even have a girlfriend. I'll go every Sunday night during the season to the local rec-league games to see the seventh and eighth graders play. If I see a kid I like, first thing I do is try to find out who the parent is, and talk to them first. I'll say, "Hey, I coach at So-and-So High School. Your son's a very good player." And then you've got to be careful, you don't want to screw yourself. So you've gotta say, like, "Are you considering sending him to a Catholic school?" You're recruiting, but you can't say that you're doing it—you can't send a kid a letter or anything like that. It's, like, you'll get in trouble, I think. Actually, I don't know what the rules are. Like, we had a kid at camp once, he was going to be an eighth grader. And I was hanging out with him for two weeks, trying to get him to come to our school. Because he said he might go to this other private school. So I told him straight out, "Fuck that—you ain't going there. You don't wanna go there." He's black, and I was like, "There's no black kids there. You'll be hanging out with all Jewish kids and stuff like that, but we've got Spanish broads at our school, and everything else."

The school, the administration, they know about these ringers. Everybody knows. I mean, the people in the office, when I was coming in before school started last year—they were joking, saying, like, "When are the ringers starting?" So everyone knows, but what are you going to do? It's what you've got to do to win. And everybody comes to the games. The priests come to the games. Everybody. They all fuckin' like winning.

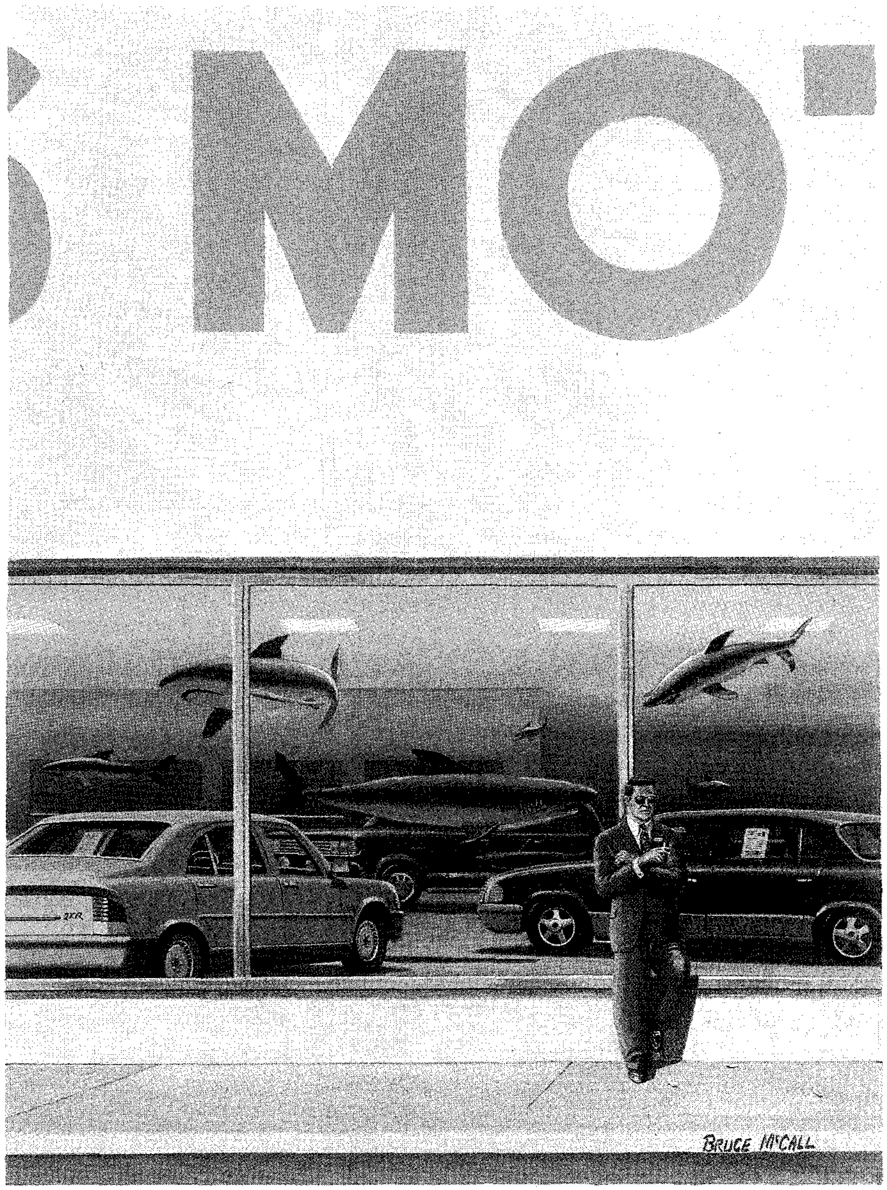
—*Interviewed by Brad Kloza*

PERSONAL HISTORY

HOW TO SELL CARS

First, you have to sell yourself.

BY BENJAMIN CHEEVER



In January of 1997, when I was training to be a car salesman at a Westchester dealership, I used to spend the late-afternoon coffee break with a fellow-trainee named Robert Garcia. We were sitting together at a Dunkin' Donuts when he asked me, "You don't suppose I've hit the bottom of the barrel? Selling cars?"

"No, of course not," I told him. "It depends on what sort of salesman you turn out to be." The truth is I was excited. The classified advertisement promised "$75,000 + No Experience Necessary! 1 Week Free Training! Eight Week Training Salary!!! We Pay While You Learn!!!" One thing I'd learned about myself was that I loved to sell. Closing, it's called, and the moment at which a deal is consummated is one of the great legal thrills still left to man. When I interviewed with Joe P., the man in charge of hiring, I told him how eager I was. "I see this as the big-game hunt of retail sales," I said.

"When you come here you'll be selling Ben Cheever first," he told me, "then the dealership, and only then the sheet metal. The cars are incidental. Can you sell Ben Cheever?"

This was a good question, I thought. Whether or not I ever sold cars, this was a good question.

"I see you made eighty thousand dollars at *Reader's Digest*," Joe said, looking at my résumé. "We'll try to get you back up there."

To get to class, you walked through the G.M. showroom, to the service garage, and up a flight of stairs, which led to a large room with a long rectangular table. There was a TV with an ancient VCR at one end and a blackboard at the other. The walls were lined with shelves that held manuals. Class was supposed to start at 2 P.M. Most of us were in our chairs by 2:05 P.M. Joe P. appeared at 2:30 P.M. and gave us all a big smile. You'd think we were the ones who were late, and that he was forgiving us. Joe, who looked to be in his early forties, was dressed down for the occasion, wearing a blue denim shirt buttoned to the top and a cardigan sweater. He was not a particularly handsome man, but he radiated warmth. He seemed always to be having the time of his life, and thinking of letting you in on it.

We went around the table and introduced ourselves, saying what we'd done and why we wanted to sell cars. There were fourteen cadets, ranging in age from their early twenties to a painting contractor who claimed to be fifty-five. There were two auto mechanics and a young man who had been laid off by Avon. He had worked on mainframes, but he said the machines had got so efficient that most of the mainframe staff had been let go.

The painting contractor, a fifty-something man I'll call Victor Amato, sat directly across from me, and we took an immediate dislike to each other. He had a mustache and wore his shirt open so that you could see his chest. He told us that he had worked so much with lead paints that, when he was a young man, a ball of lead formed in his stomach "this big." He cupped his hands together, as if they held a golf ball.

BRUCE McCALL

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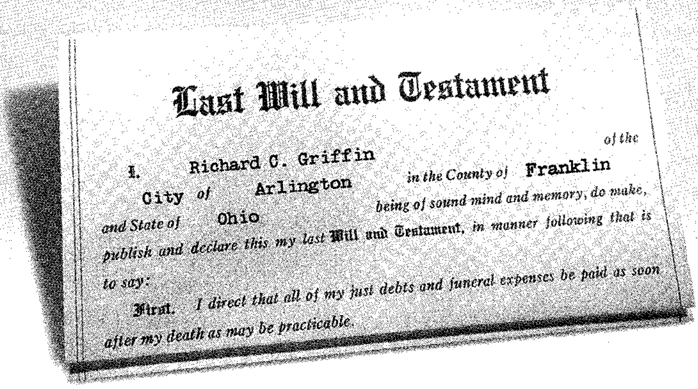

Last Will and Testament

I, Richard C. Griffin of the City of Arlington in the County of Franklin and State of Ohio being of sound mind and memory, do make, publish and declare this my last Will and Testament, in manner following that is to say:

First. I direct that all of my just debts and funeral expenses be paid as soon after my death as may be practicable.

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"O.K., guys, now let's go and earn that four hundred times our workers' salaries."

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I asked if it had been surgically removed.

"No," he said. "I just drank a lot of milk. You can't kill me. I've been shot at twice. I've been knifed."

Joe bit the bullet immediately. "I don't think any mom or dad wants their son or daughter to grow up and sell cars," he told the class. He said he'd once had doubts of his own but that he loved it now. We were each given a handout of car-sales statistics. We were also given a forty-seven-page stapled-together "bible."

People are naturally negative, Joe said. "You can't be. You have got to be cheerful. It doesn't matter if you like people. I hate people," he said, and beamed. "What about you?"

"There's a switch in there," he went on. "You need to be able to find that switch and turn it. There are no natural-born salesmen. It's all training." He asked if any of us had seen the video clip of President Reagan being shot. "Everybody hit the deck, but there was one man standing tall," Joe told us. "That was a Secret Service agent. When a gun goes off, it's human instinct to hit the deck. But that man didn't. He was supposed to take the bullet. That's the triumph of training over instinct."

Joe released us at five-forty, and we lined up to have a private word. We all had the same question: "I was wondering, could I work in Toyota?" I had friends who drove Toyotas; I didn't have friends who drove American cars. Economics trumped taste, though, because Victor Amato drove a Ford Windstar and he also wanted to sell Toyotas.

When I got home and told my wife that I hoped I could work in Toyota, she said this was a bad idea, because John Updike's "Rabbit" novels were about a man who managed a Toyota dealership.

"You don't understand," I said. "I want to sell cars."

Joe arrived late again on the second day but was as cheerful as ever. He told us about dealing with the customer's F.A.C.C. This stood for Fear, Anxiety, Cynicism, and Confusion. Joe said it was commonplace for customers to think they were making their purchasing decision based on price alone. He said this was an error. He said that the first and most important factor in any sale was the sales consultant. "You," he said, and pointed around the table. The second was the dealership. The third was the car. He told us that price was the least important consideration and therefore should be left for last. "Never discuss the price until you've sold the car."

Since customers were bound to try to ask about price before we wanted them to, we were told to memorize a number of "bypasses," which were laid out in the bible and included:

I CAN APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN FOR PRICE, IT IS CERTAINLY AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION, HOWEVER I HAVE DIFFICULTY JUST KEEPING UP WITH OUR 300 VEHICLE INVENTORY, NEVER MIND THE BEST PRICE ON EACH OF THEM, ASIDE FROM PRICE DID YOU PREFER THE ..... OR .....?

IT'S NOT UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT MY BEST OFFER ON THIS SPECIFIC MODEL, AFTER ALL IT IS YOUR HARD-EARNED MONEY, UNFORTUNATELY THERE ARE FACTORS SUCH AS INVENTORY AGE, WHICH WILL IMPACT A VEHICLE MINIMALLY OR SIGNIFICANTLY. IF I GUESS TOO LOW AND CANNOT DELIVER, YOU WILL BECOME VERY IRATE. IF I GUESS TOO HIGH YOU MAY JUST LOSE INTEREST. FOR THE SAKE OF ALL PARTIES IT IS BEST WE PICK THE PERFECT VEHICLE FIRST AND THEN DISCUSS PRICE IN GREAT DETAIL. THEREFORE, WERE ..... OR ......????

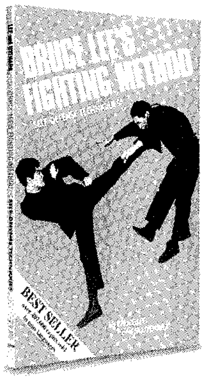
We were taught to say "Welcome to Wegman Auto. I'm John Doe, and you are . . . ?" (I've changed the names of the dealership and the people involved.) We read in the bible, "We incorporate the word 'welcome' during our greeting. Sales psychologists have concluded after extensive analysis that the word 'welcome' reduces some of the fear and anxiety experienced by consumers, resulting in dramatic reductions in heart rate observed in members of the control group. Moreover, it enhances the ambience with additional warmth."

Next, you were supposed to ask if they were first-time Wegman customers, partly to establish a phantom army of previous Wegman customers—all, apparently, well satisfied. Then Joe wanted us to say, "And who's the lucky person buying a new car today?"

"It's great to be a salesman," Joe told us, "because you get to create reality."

I kept trying to get Joe alone so I could tell him about how my friends yearned to buy Toyotas. I heard that Robert Garcia was going to Nissan. (Wegman Auto sold several lines.) Joe

● **Buy**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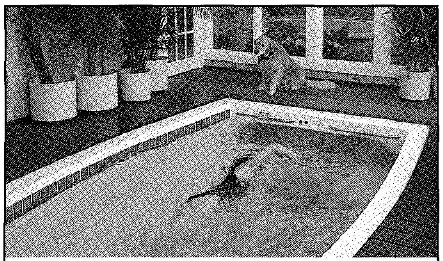

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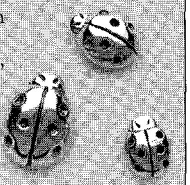

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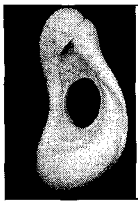

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kept saying the assignments hadn't yet been worked out. At least that was better than hearing that I was going to G.M. I figured he might be holding off on the announcement, because the news that I was going to Toyota would create a firestorm of envy.

Then one day Joe P. finally let me catch him. He gave me one of his great smiles. The man was like a potbellied stove; he radiated that much heat.

"So where am I going to be?" I asked.

He nodded, as if he were about to do me an unexpected favor. "We tried younger people in G.M.," he said. "But, you know, G.M. customers like a more mature face."

"So I'm going to be in G.M.? I'm not going to be in Toyota? Or even Nissan?"

"Yup."

"When I am diagnosed with cancer, I want you to bring the news," I told him. "You'll make it seem like my lucky break."

Joe smiled.

"And who else is going to G.M.?" I asked.

"Victor Amato," he said.

"Management already told me I got a great fucking personality for selling cars," Victor told me when we went downstairs together into the big G.M. showroom. He'd heard a story about a friend of his who once threw a customer up against the wall and said, "You're not leaving here until you buy a fucking car." This was Victor's model. I was taking the opposite approach. I was going to be the New Age salesman, the sensitive salesman. I had a bowl of clementines for my desk, a Magic 8 Ball as an icebreaker, plus a windup toy seal to amuse the children while I charmed their parents into ruinous debt. I had brushed my cowboy boots and wore a Polo suit. Victor had a suit, too, and French cuffs on his shirt, and a tie tack. We were pumped.

The G.M. and Nissan showrooms of Wegman Auto are in the front of a large, low-slung structure. (Toyota is in a smaller building across the road to the south.) The G.M. showroom held eight cars, promotional cutouts, and ten chin-high cubicles, plus a set of separate desks with computer terminals for the managers.

Victor and I set up our cubicles. I had a framed picture with both of my sons in a fake wanted poster. Victor had "in" and "out" trays, and a calculator with a huge crystal readout. I had a smaller model, but it printed. We each went separately to the local mall and had nameplates engraved. We waited. We sat in our cubicles and read brochures and waited. Almost nobody came through the glass door.

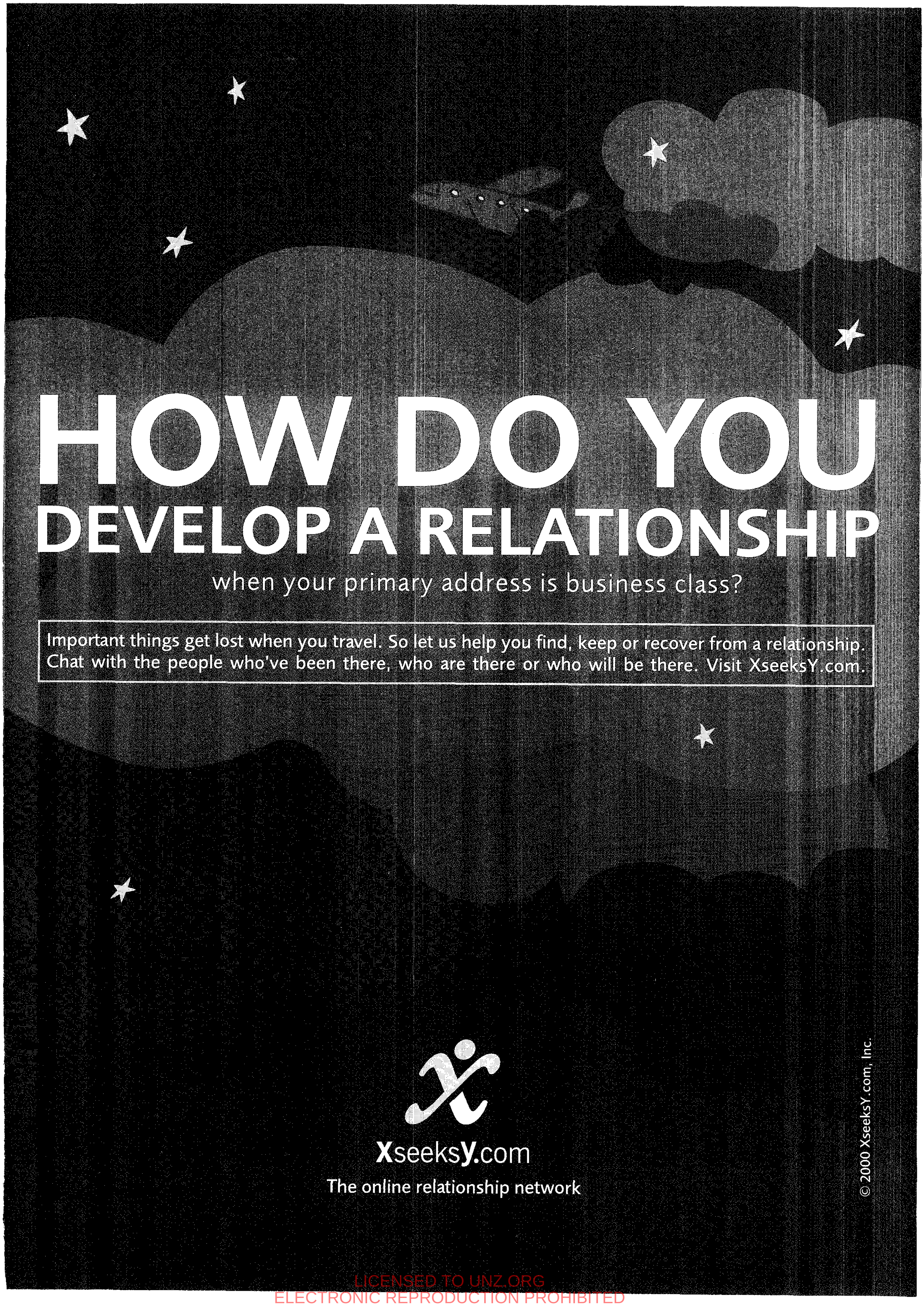
The general sales manager, or G.S.M., was a redheaded guy I'll call Jeffrey Stern. He tried to make up for the lack of business by having us work the phones. The Wegman computer coughed up the names and numbers of people whose cars we had serviced.

"Hello, this is Ben Cheever calling from Wegman Cadillac," I would say. "I wanted to tell you about the terrific deal we have on the Cadillac Catera. It's a thirty-six-thousand-dollar car, and you can have it for nine hundred and ninety-nine dollars down and three hundred and ninety-nine dollars a month. Would you like to come in for a test drive today, or can I pencil you in for later in the week?"

Mostly, I got answering machines, or prospects who said, "No, thank you," or prospects who said, "Would you *please* leave me alone." With one customer who had had a Buick Riviera serviced, I said, "Why don't you come in and see the new Riviera?" There was a bewildered pause, and then the prospect said, "You know, I actually own a Riviera. What a coincidence!"

Cold calling isn't any fun, but I worked at it, sometimes making more than twenty calls in a day. I noticed that the older salesmen simply refused this indignity. Given their lists, they'd grumble, retire to their cubicles, and glower out at the room. All the time, they were keeping their eyes on the door.

The veterans wouldn't even wait for a customer to come inside. Danny Johnson was often out front, smoking and scanning the lot. A big man, he was a retired building inspector for the City of New York, and the line was that he'd been trained not to see. He favored a white cardigan sweater with large pockets on the sides. "For inserting



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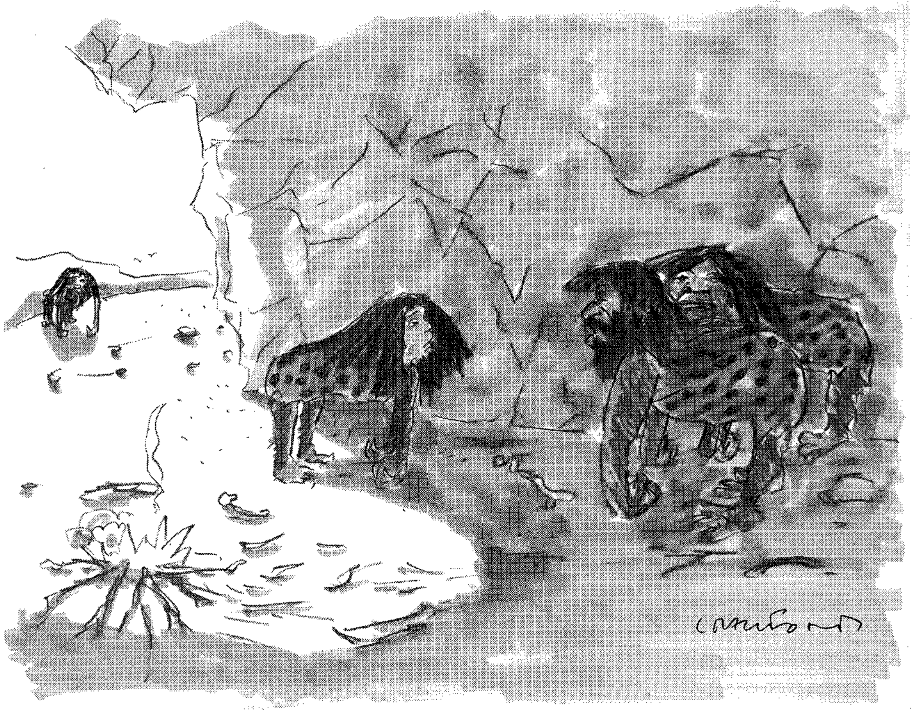

"Of course, we're happy for you and Klaza, Beega. But tell me, what do his people do?"

• •

bribes," he used to joke. He didn't pace around the showroom so much as tack, like a sailboat, covering the area in diagonals.

Danny didn't go with any of this "Welcome to Wegman Auto" nonsense. He'd just arrive off the prospect's shoulder, like a second airplane flying in a tight formation. He was a heavy smoker, and you could hear him breathe, so customers knew right away that he was there. He rarely gave someone an excuse to tell him to get lost. He started in the middle of a conversation. "Red's a popular color," he might say. "Easy to keep clean." Or, "It's a much roomier car inside than it appears to be." Then if they didn't say anything he wouldn't say anything, either, but all the time they could hear him back there breathing.

He was famous for having left a couple at his desk once, right at the close. They had agreed on a car but were refusing to meet his price. Danny stood up and walked out of the showroom. Nobody knew where he had gone. The customers were baffled and hurt. They got up and looked for him. They asked around. After an hour, Danny reappeared. They accepted his deal immediately.

"Where did you go?" I asked him.

"To lunch," he told me.

Danny, along with two other veterans, got most of the "ups." Prospects were called ups, because of the "up sheet." This is a legal-size form with three carbons. There was space at the top for your name and the customer's name, and the car or cars under consideration. The body of the form was for evaluating the horse they rode in on. This was to remind us of the dreaded trade-in ambush.

Forty per cent of the people who buy a car will have a trade-in, Joe P. had told us. Ten per cent of these will try to conceal the trade until you've already given them the best possible price on the new car. "It's like you're standing with your pants down around your ankles," Joe said. The difficulty with taking a car in trade is that the customer is thinking about its retail value and the dealer is talking wholesale. The salesman's countermove is to play down the value of the car being traded in, and also to take some of the money off the list of the new car and add it to the apparent value of the trade-in.

Under the veterans, there was a layer of salesmen who were relatively new but not absolutely green. One of them, Rick Kaiser, had the cubicle next to mine. Rick was a retired New York City cop, and he sometimes wore his Glock to work. I could see the bump under his suit jacket when he leaned forward. Rick had the best equipment: a bookshelf, plants, a jar of pretzels, a label-maker, scissors, and a Scotch-tape dispenser. He was good about sharing, too.

The G.S.M. had two assistant managers, each of whom handled four salesmen. My assistant manager, Gary, looked exactly like a Mafia capo's second bodyguard, not the nice-looking one. He wore little black lace-up shoes and billowing double-breasted jackets. Thoreau says a man's face is his masterpiece, and Gary, though he was always kind and patient with me, had the expression of a man who had just murdered a chorus girl, chopped her up, and put the pieces in the trunk of a car.

Over at Nissan, Robert Garcia was selling cars almost every day. Once in a great while, a G.M. veteran would move a Buick, but business was so slow that I wasn't alert to the possibility of humiliation. Then, one afternoon, I noticed that Victor's posture had altered. He was walking around on the balls of his feet, the tails of his suit jacket fluttering behind him. Then he came into my cubicle and dropped into a chair. "Did you sell a car?" he asked.

"No," I said, my spirits plummeting. "Did *you*?"

He had.

I was sad. I was furious. I was in despair. "I couldn't believe that asshole sold a car before I did," I told a friend that night.

It was after dark the next day when Mr. and Mrs. Wonderful came in, and I guess Danny must have been in the bathroom, or off duty, because they passed through the front door unclaimed.

"You take them," Rick whispered to me. "Pop the cherry."

I couldn't believe my luck. He had a good chin, short hair, and great posture. She was pretty, and very pregnant. They were both employed and driving a 1985 Oldsmobile Cutlass with 155,000 miles on it. Plus they were already sold on a 1996 teal Pontiac Bonneville with a

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Money.

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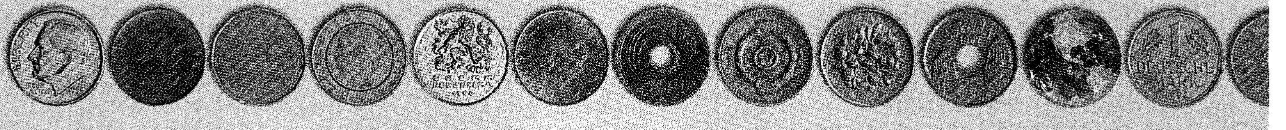

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spoiler which was sitting right out on the showroom floor. They'd come in a couple of months ago, they said, but they'd been frightened away by a salesman who was too aggressive. I loved them for that.

No trade-in ambush. Nor did they have to be convinced of the superiority of American cars. The Cutlass still ran like a clock.

"Of course you want a new car to bring the baby home from the hospital in," I said.

When you first get customers into your cubicle, you sit behind the desk and they sit in the visitors' chairs. Then you go to your assistant manager with the specifics of the deal, and he works it up on the lease-and-loan computer. He writes down what the monthly payments will be. The first couple of times this is done, you come back to the cubicle with two columns of figures. One is what it will cost them to carry the car as a lease; the other is what it will cost to finance the car. This gives them two choices, either of which means a sale.

Gary called me over to his desk. "What about their credit?" he asked.

"I don't know, but I imagine it's great," I said. "Two young people. No children. Both employed."

"Let's do a five-liner," Gary said. That's when prospective customers fill out a brief form that enables the dealership to look up their financial history. They filled it out, I gave it to Gary, and he carried it in to Finance & Insurance.

The Wonderfuls and I talked some more about what a splendid car the Bonneville is. We asked the Magic 8 Ball if they would buy a car tonight. "SIGNS POINT TO YES." Mr. Wonderful ate a clementine.

Gary called me back to the main desk. "Credit's not good," he told me. "Bankrupt."

Walking out to my car that night, I told one of the veterans how shocked I was. "It would have saved a lot of time if they had told me about the bankruptcy at the beginning," I said.

He chuckled. "Buyers are liars," he said.

Friends of mine still remember how changed I was by the job. I seemed a couple of inches taller, my voice was deeper. I often touched people when we were talking. But this was merely a change in style. The basic rules are the same on the Upper East Side as they are on a car lot. I've met many women at dinner parties who are far more intoxicating than I ever was as a Pontiac salesman. Just a nanosecond of regret when she realizes that she'll not be seated next to Michael Bloomberg, then the full, dazzling smile. "Benjamin Cheever," she'll say. "What luck! I get to sit next to you all evening." They're making lemonade out of lemons. Car salesmen do the same thing.

Shortly after the sale that had got snagged on bad credit, a man of about my age came in to look at a new Bonneville. I was out at the door when he appeared. I didn't smoke, but I had learned to like standing out there. Get my bait in the water. "Welcome to Wegman Auto," I said, smiling broadly.

He wanted to know what a Pontiac Bonneville cost. "J. D. Power ranked the Bonneville the most appealing premium midsize car," I said. "It's a popular vehicle." This was safe: everybody always wanted to buy a popular vehicle. We had a Bonneville on the floor. I said he could look at the sticker but that wasn't going to give him an accurate impression. "Every car has a different price. First, we've got to figure out exactly what you want."

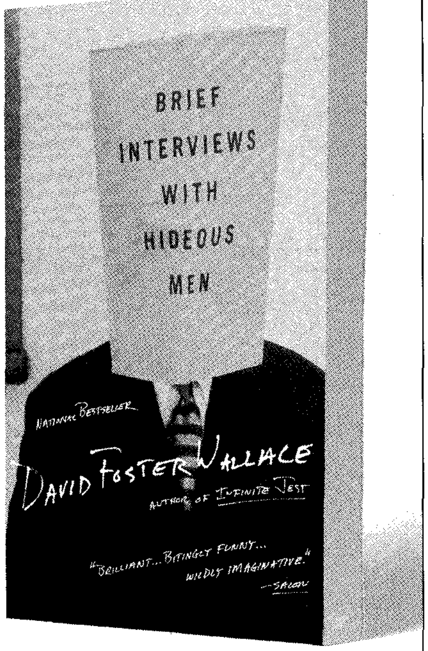
I led him back to my cubicle, and got his statistics. One of the essential skills is to hide your enthusiasm. Act concerned. Act caring. But don't act as if it's payday.

We went for a test drive. "The Pontiac is a driver's car," I said. I mentioned the daytime running lights: "You know, in some Scandinavian countries the lights go on when you switch on the engine. The Bonneville has daytime running lights. Statistics show that this significantly reduces accidents."

Mirror the customer, Joe P. had told us. This is natural behavior. Somebody yawns, you yawn. Somebody scratches his ear . . . But if you can scale it up you can help move a customer toward the close of a sale. So if he's a liberal then you're a liberal, too. And if he hates welfare cheats, then you think they should be in jail. The Bonneville prospect told me that he worked as a salesman himself. I told him I liked being a salesman. I told him I thought salesmen had got a bad rap.

"Listen," Joe had told us. I left long pauses in my speech, hoping the prospect would fill them. He was reticent but not shy. There were long stretches of silence, while he drove the car. I didn't fill

NATIONAL BESTSELLER



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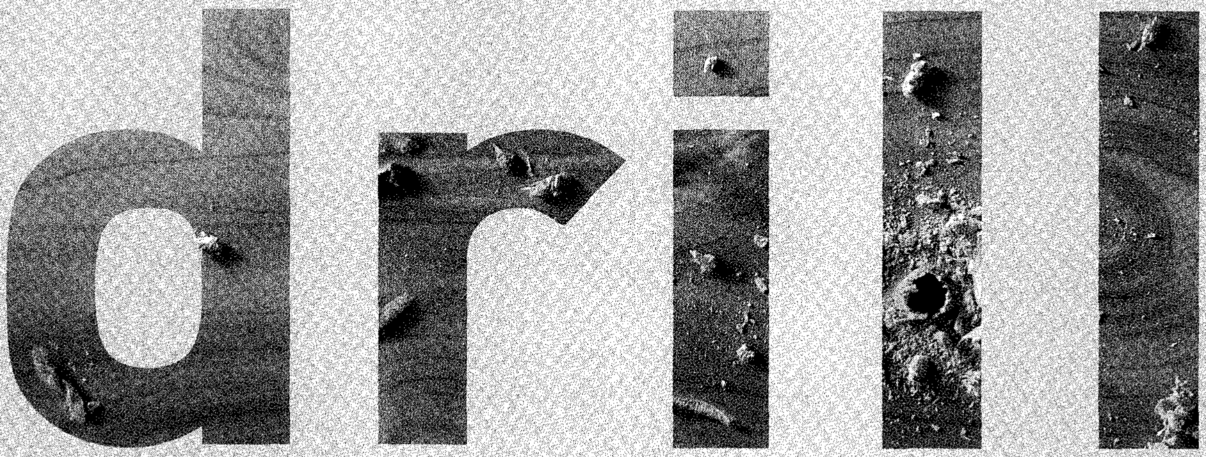

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I said I'd be interested. "But let's do this first."

Back in the showroom, I called Gary to join us. Once you get near the sale, you bring your assistant manager back to the cubicle. Then *he* sits behind the desk, and you stand out with the customers, as if you're one of them, as if you're on their side. It's a basic flanking move; the emotional connection with the first salesman drives the close.

The man gave us his credit card and signed his buy order. Gary always got magnanimous when a deal was closed. He'd make a speech—the mudguard, floor-mat speech—all about an option he was including gratis. "So youse can really enjoy the vehicle." He added a pinstripe this time. A pinstripe costs fifty dollars.

The car we sold wasn't on our lot, but there was a dealer in Vermont who would make a swap. It looked like a lock. I felt really good again for the first time since Victor popped the cherry. Not that I relaxed. I called my man every day. When he went to Chicago, I called him in Chicago.

When he finally came in and picked up the car, I tried to stretch the close out, make him a customer for life. I noticed he was a little cool, though. I was terrified that he might back out of the deal. He took the car. Before he drove off, I gave him a card with my home phone number written on the back.

One of our obligations was to call our customers several times after they'd taken the car and make certain they were happy, but after my man took his Bonneville I could never get him on the phone. Was he afraid that I was going to hock him about a job for a personable young man? I sold eight cars, and three of the people I sold them to intimated that after the deal was consummated they'd be offering me a job. Not one of them did. Buyers are liars.

In the following very slow weeks, I had one customer who said that he wanted something in leather but was horrified when he saw the sticker price on the Pontiac Sunfire, which was the

DAY JOB

Slaughterhouse human-resources director.

STEPHEN KRONINGER

There are many different kinds of beef-processing plants; we're at the tail end of them. We process "canners and cutters"—that means the ole rickety cows. Kind of second-rate cows. Mostly, we have government contracts. We sell a lot to schools for school lunches.

And what happens here is the cows come into the kill department—that's where they do the slaughter. They lead them into the chute and they stun them with a stun gun. Then they swing them up with hydraulics, about twenty feet into the air. While they're still stunned they slit their throats. The floor is usually a couple of inches deep in blood.

The dead cows go around the room on a hydraulic pulley system so people can do different procedures to them. For instance, they take the hide off. That's the hide-puller's job. Someone else splits the middle, and all the intestines fall out. There's other people who clean the cheek meat off the head. Every part of the cow is used. After the cows are killed, they have to chill for at least twenty-four hours, because you can't cut warm cows. It's a big operation. We need to have at least two hundred and seventy workers every day to run the plant. And we're just desperate for workers. Last month, I hired eighty-five people and ninety-two left. That's not uncommon. No matter how I sell them on the job, they go down there and find it not exactly to their liking. But the biggest problem is the simple fact that nobody wants to kill cows. The recruitment—boy, I use every tactic to get people to work in this place. I've made these clever little ads with cows. I use the job service, the social services. I go to jails and halfway houses.

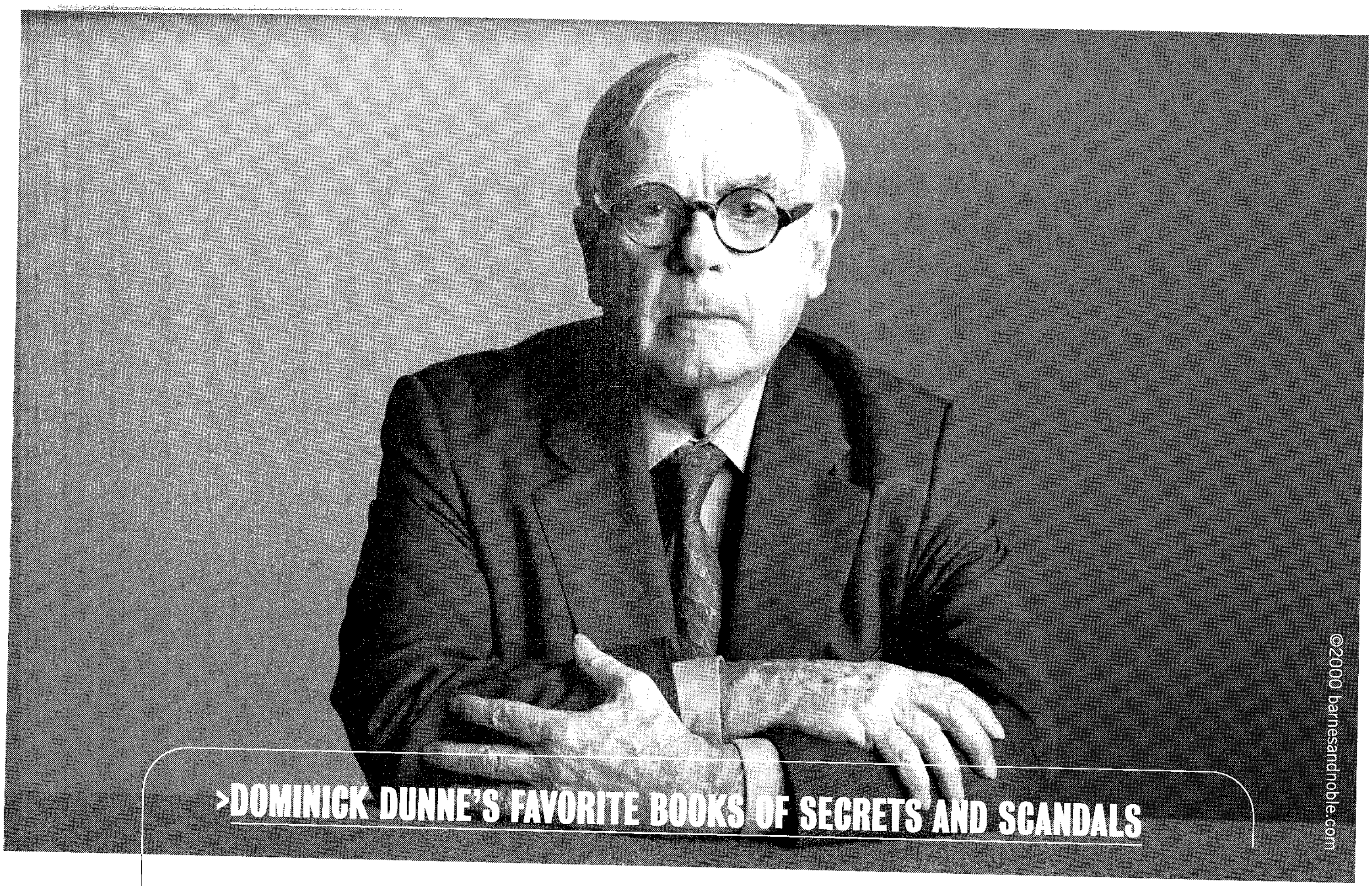
We see about a hundred and fifty injuries a year, and I'm amazed there aren't more. Everybody works so fast that there's a lot of repetitive injuries. There are times when the ambulances come several times a day. It's awful.

A lot of what I end up doing is kind of like social work. I've arranged childcare for these people so they could come in to work. I've talked to Immigration about their green cards. Sometimes, if they get drunk and don't come in, I'll go try and pick them up. Or we'll have safety parties, and I'll order pizza. I'm kind of like their mom. I'm going to end up walking out—I have nothing left to give.

The plant is always in trouble with the city over the dumb things we're doing. Sometimes we've dumped blood into the lagoons. The horrible smell—we got forced to put some kind of chimney filters on the rendering department, and the smell is still just incredible.

There's a stigma for people who work here. There really is. I belonged to several professional organizations, and when they found out where I worked they were like, "Oh my gosh, you work there?" People are just disgusted by it. Yet isn't it funny how people eat all the hamburgers?

—*Interviewed by Eric Weddle*



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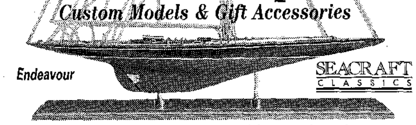

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most economical (read "cheap") new car in our lot. Danny had a man who came in and said, "Money is no object," but when it came time to put a couple of hundred dollars down, he said he first had to check with his wife about the color. "He'll never come back," Danny told me. "Neither of them will."

"Money is no object" became a running joke. "Benny," Danny would say whenever he caught my eye, "I want something in leather. You got anything in leather?"

"Money is no object," I'd reply.

Everyone was having bad luck. Victor spent a couple of hours with a woman who had a huge folder of information she'd got from *Consumer Reports* and other sources. It looked as if they were getting along. But afterward Victor said, "I'd like to put her through the fucking window. She knows more about the car than I do. How you gonna sell a person like that?"

One morning, I walked in with one of the veterans, a guy who'd worked at I.B.M. before he got canned. He asked how I was getting along with Jeffrey Stern, the G.S.M. I said not well. He said that Stern was in a foul humor, because he had been moved from Toyota. He said that Joe P. had promised Stan Wegman that he would do for G.M. what he'd done for Toyota.

"And he didn't?"

"Toyota still sells a hundred and forty cars a month. G.M. sells thirty."

He said he'd show me on paper how bad it was. We'd all been getting a draw (unearned advance on expected commissions) of three hundred dollars a week, but he said that actually most of us were earning less than three hundred a week. He said we would end by owing the dealership money. He wrote down the figures as he explained. Since the average markup was a thousand dollars—and our commission amounted to twenty per cent of that—a salesman needed to sell six cars in order to chalk up six thousand dollars in gross profit. And, he said, if you didn't earn your draw, Wegman could ask for the money back.

I woke up in the middle of the night thinking about this. It was fun selling cars. I didn't expect to make a fortune. I also didn't expect to have to write the dealership a check.

The next day, Danny took me aside. "Benny, you should quit," he said. I said

I didn't want to quit. I said the job was fun. "Fun's all right, but you can't take fun to the bank," Danny said. "Benny, the job looks good on paper. World War Two looked good on paper to Hitler. And look how it come out."

Then we had one murderously slow day. I don't believe there was one genuine prospect. We were all depressed. "If this keeps up, I'm going to want to shoot somebody," Rick said.

Stern was on me to make phone calls. It wasn't working. Most people just wouldn't come in to the showroom, and I had to wheedle those who did so hard that the chances of selling them a car were slim.

"Ben," Stern said whenever I stepped away from my desk, "you're not making your phone calls."

"Look at my sheet," I finally said. "I made all my fucking phone calls."

Then Stern walked out into the center of the showroom. He picked up a phone and pressed page. "All G.M. salesmen on me," he said. "All G.M. salesmen on me."

When we got there, and most of us didn't have to go very far, he said, "Since you people don't want to make phone calls, we're going to do a little work on product knowledge."

He led us all over to the Cadillac Catera. "Ben is going to do the walk-around," he said. "Danny is going to be the customer."

Everybody else formed a circle around the car.

"Welcome to Wegman Auto," I said. "My name is Ben Cheever, and yours?" My voice was choking with rage.

"Danny," Danny said. "Danny Johnson."

"What brings you here today, Mr. Johnson?"

"I'm not going to buy a car," Danny said. "I'm only shopping."

"Fine," I said. "Have you purchased a car from Wegman in the past, or is this your first visit?"

Danny said it was his first visit.

The trouble here was that I was remembering what I wasn't supposed to say about the Catera: that the engine was built by Opel, that it was a small car for a Cadillac. I could feel Stern watching me.

"The car has a hundred and ninety horsepower," I said.

"Two hundred," Danny said.

"Two hundred horsepower," I said.

Stern broke in. "How many litres does the engine have?"

I said, "Let me check," and started to walk around to the window sticker.

"Buzz!" Stern said. "Wrong! You're supposed to know the specifications on every car in this showroom." Everybody was looking. Everybody was quiet. "Everybody should know the specs on every car in the showroom."

I turned around and walked up to Stern. He was furious, sticking out his chin at me. I was furious as well. "Nobody knows all the fucking specifications on every car in this showroom," I said.

"You should," Stern said, and he gave a wolfish grin.

"All right, then," I said, and I began to jab at the shoulder of his double-breasted jacket with my hand. "Fire me! Fire me now for not knowing what nobody knows!"

After that, Stern led me into an office and closed the door. Then we were both shouting at each other.

Me saying, "Nobody makes their fucking calls but me, and you're always on my ass."

Him saying, "I don't want this to be a good showroom. I want this to be the best fucking showroom."

Me saying, "You think I don't want to sell cars? I want to sell cars more than I want anything else in the world." Which was true at that moment.

When I got back to my cubicle, I sat there trembling. Five minutes later, Stern came out of the office and walked the floor. I was scheduled to go off duty at 6 P.M. He came over to my cubicle at 5:42 P.M. and said, "You're off at six?"

I said I was.

"You can go now," he said.

So I did. I went and got my coat. When I passed Victor's cubicle, he wouldn't even look up. I walked out through the showroom. Everybody was at his desk. Nobody was talking. Nobody was on the phone. When I passed Danny, he called out to me in a hoarse whisper. "Money is no object," he said.

Two days later, we had our Saturday-morning meeting. Stern got us all in one cubicle and went from man to man, giving profit figures, some congratulations, and some criticisms. Victor had had some bad luck, he said, but Victor would be O.K. I assumed I wouldn't be O.K. I assumed I would be fired. He'd use me to

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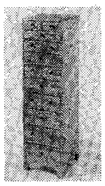

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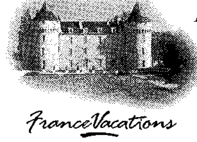

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show the others who was boss. When he got to me, though, he wasn't angry anymore. He reached out and grabbed my shoulder with his hand. "Benny here done phenomenal," he said.

For the month of February, I had a higher gross profit than any of the other new salesmen. It's shaming to admit, but this counts as one of the half-dozen happiest moments of my life. My heart was racing, my pulse roaring in my ears. I could feel my feet tingling down there in my cowboy boots.

I was talking with Rick Kaiser afterward. I said I'd thought Victor was way ahead. After all, he'd sold the first car.

"Victor?" Kaiser said. "He sells cars like old people fuck."

I was still a second-rate salesman, but I had learned the patter, learned when to listen. Most important, I learned never to laugh at a customer, or even to smile in disbelief. So when a gentleman appeared a week or so later and said he needed to see a car—any car—with a compass in it, I didn't see anything funny about it. He'd heard that there was an Oldsmobile minivan with a compass. That was the Silhouette. I didn't say, "I once had a compass for my car, and it didn't work." I didn't say, "If you're interested in minivans, I like the Pontiac Montana better." Unfortunately, our single Silhouette had a sunroof, and the ones with a sunroof didn't have a compass. My old man, Jefferson Trowbridge, looked like a dry well.

Soft-spoken, neatly dressed and groomed, Trowbridge was easy to like. He told me he had just bought a new Cadillac Catera in January. It was March. The prospects weren't good, but I stayed hopeful.

"It's not really a Cadillac," he said.

"Sure, it's a Cadillac," I said. "I'd be fired if I admitted that it wasn't a Cadillac." He told me that he was eighty-eight years old. I told him that the Catera is made by Opel in Germany and has the same engine as the Saab 900. He didn't seem to care about litres.

Back at the showroom, we settled into my cubicle. He didn't want a clementine. He had no questions for the Magic 8 Ball. I got the precise spelling of his name, and his phone number. Then I asked if (a) he would like me to order him an Oldsmobile Silhouette with a compass or if (b) he wanted to look at one of the Cadillac sedans we had on the lot—one of which almost certainly had a compass. This is known as the "a or b" close. You give two options, both of which move toward a sale.

He chose b. If we had any Cadillacs with compasses, he'd look at one of those. So I got the keys to a burgundy Cadillac DeVille sedan, and we went and sat in it. There was a compass right up there in the rearview mirror.

He said he'd like to trade in the Cadillac Catera and get the Cadillac DeVille. How much would that cost?

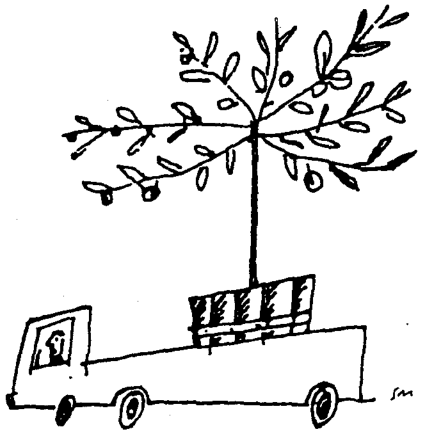
I went over to Gary. This was way too good to be true. "He's interested," I said. Gary fiddled with his computer for a while and then came back and said the exchange would cost ninety-five hundred dollars.

Not my idea of good news. If you're lost at sea, a compass is vital, but nine thousand five hundred dollars seemed a lot to pay for such an instrument when you were just off the highway in Westchester. Still, I remembered what Joe P. had told us: "There are no natural-born salesmen. It's the triumph of training over instinct." Walking back to the cubicle, I tried to stand up straight, something else that has never come naturally to me. "We can make the trade immediately," I said, and beamed. "The car you like is free and clear. We can run the papers, switch the plates. Spot-deliver it. You can have the exact vehicle you want. You can drive home in it this afternoon. It'll only cost you ninety-five hundred dollars."

Jefferson blanched, and he let a couple of beats go by. "That sounds all right," he said. "But I'll need to think about it."

I waited a couple of hours for him to get home and settle in. Then I called him up. "Did you think about it?"

"It sounds good to me," he said. "But, you know, I hate to pay taxes. If you can absorb the taxes, we've got a deal."



"We'll split them," Gary told me. "Tell him we'll split the taxes."

Trowbridge didn't pick up when I phoned him that evening or the next day. Sure, I thought. He's going to pay ten thousand dollars for a compass on a car he hasn't even taken for a test drive. He's probably over at Ford now, looking at a Lincoln with a thermometer.

Then he called me. He said he was going to visit a tailor in Mount Kisco, but on the way back he'd stop in. I told him the taxes were about six hundred and forty dollars and we'd split them. He went for it.

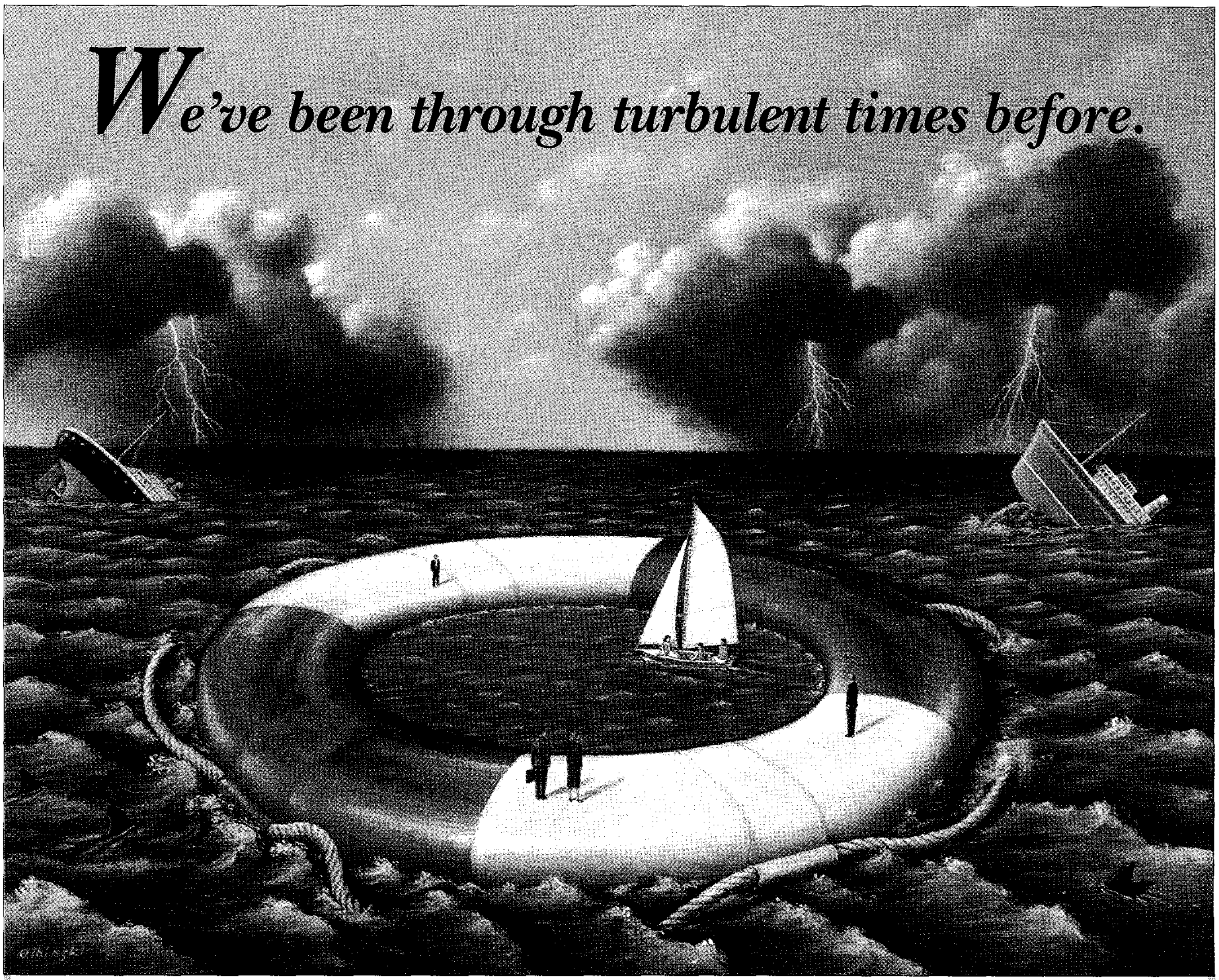
Rumors of a big sale always spread mysteriously through the showroom. Everybody seemed to know that Benny was selling a thirty-eight-thousand-dollar DeVille at sticker price and taking in trade a Catera that was also virtually new. There was joy in Mudville. "It's a good deal," Gary told me. "We can go a month without a deal like this. We can go a year without a deal like this." After the buy order is signed, the options, insurance, and deal with the bank are all completed in Finance & Insurance. A key man in F. & I. was picked to work this sale.

"There are fat profits here," the F. & I. ace told me. "We can make this a one-payment lease and not charge him anything. In fact, we can make it into a one-payment lease and give him a check for ten thousand dollars. It'll look like we're generous." He explained that we'd take possession of his old car but lease him the DeVille for two years. The customer wouldn't really own the new car, but he'd drive off in it, and in the meantime we'd be giving him money.

I said that sounded fine, as long as it was explained. "He's eighty-eight years old," I said.

I was given the manual for the sedan. I set the clock and tried the radio, tried the heat. I learned how to adjust the seat and the mirror. I couldn't figure out about the compass.

When Jefferson arrived, smiling and full of apologies for being late, I brought him over to the F. & I. ace. Then I went and sat in my cubicle and watched them through the glass partition. My phone rang. Would I join them in F. & I.? The ace was scowling now. It turned out that



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ALONG OVERGROWN PATHS

The road crowds houses almost into the lake.
On one side one day they may go plop
a short drop down a bluff a mere bank.
On the other side houses cling to it
(the road) for dear life, passing in cars
one might roll right in, well, at
the door. A first arrival by lunar eclipse:
it won't ever lose an aura of mystery
of a moon eroding and changing to the orange
of bloodroot sap. One of those roasting hot
Easters. Trilliums popped out of the ground
and unfurled at your feet before your eyes.
It was that hot. "I want," the man said,
"my stairs twice as wide as other stairs."
That was one day in 1823. They still are.
Not so high as some, wider than most,
beds can go up and down in ease and do.
Far better a hall than that extra room.
Far better a dining room than a nook.
Or a nook than a cranny or a cranny
than nothing, unless enclosed as in
this roadside hall, with wide stairs
to descend and walk out onto violets
blue, blue-violet, white, and brickish-pink
and the private houses could touch
if they'd a mind to put out their hands.

—James Schuyler
(1923-1991)

Jefferson didn't have the title on his car. We needed the title to make the deal.

I stepped back into the showroom, dizzy with the blow. Victor had already heard. "You're screwed," he said.

Gary was at my cubicle and signalled violently for me to join him there. "Will you drive him?" he asked, as soon as I got there. "Will you drive him home and get the title?"

I said Millbrook was an hour away. That would be a two-hour drive, at least. "Should I do that?"

"You better do it," Gary said. "He might forget. He might die."

So Jefferson and I drove off together, and we got to talking. He was a little shy about admitting it but said that his greatest hero was the man he'd been named after, Thomas Jefferson. I said that I, too, was an admirer of Thomas Jefferson. Trowbridge had visited Monticello. I hadn't. I had seen "Jefferson in Paris." Trowbridge hadn't.

His apartment was neat and bright. He had a candlestick collection. "She collected these," he said. "So I brought them up here." Trowbridge told me that he still said good morning to his late wife's picture every day, and good night to it before he went to sleep.

He found the title. We drove back to Wegman. The burgundy DeVille was parked right out in front of the main door, still dripping from the car wash. There were two men out in the sun drying it when we pulled in. They transferred the plates. Ordinarily, the salesman does this. The entire dealership seemed to have been galvanized.

"That's your car," I said. "Want to take it for a ride?"

He didn't see the need, but I insisted. "We have to make sure it's not broken."

So I led him through delivery. Everything worked splendidly. Everything but the compass.

"I think it has to be set up," I said. "If

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you have trouble with it, come back and we'll fix it."

He didn't seem to mind. He liked the roomy feel of the car.

I led him to F. & I., and made the pass off to our ace in that office. Then I went and sat in my cubicle. Rick Kaiser leaned over the partition. "You're going to make four or five thousand on the deal," he said. "You're going to be salesman of the month."

I sat at my desk and watched anxiously as the man at F. & I. did his magic. Then my phone rang.

"Mr. Trowbridge is ready," I was told. "Why don't you come in and take him out to his car?"

So I walked over to F. & I. Trowbridge had all his papers in his hand. He was beaming. "You know what?" he said. "They actually gave me a check."

"Really?" I said, as if this were a big surprise.

"That's right. I get a new car and also a check."

"Good," I said. "I'm glad."

"You want to see it?" he asked.

"Sure," I said. So we stopped walking and he showed me the check.

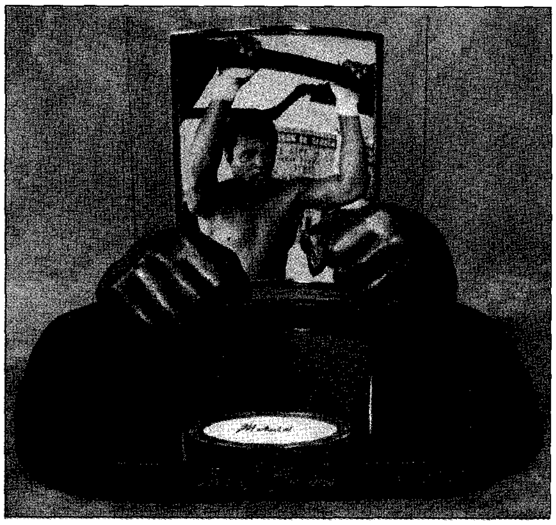
It was for two hundred dollars. I couldn't believe my eyes. I looked again. Two hundred dollars. But F. & I. had told me the old man was getting ten thousand dollars. What happened to the other ninety-eight hundred, I wondered. I felt ill. I walked Trowbridge to the car. He got in. He said that he was pleased to have met me. I said that I was pleased to have met him. "I'm tickled," he told me. "I still don't know how I got the car and didn't have to pay a thing." He drove off.

I walked back into the showroom. The man at F. & I. was on the phone, of course, so I went to Gary. "That guy was supposed to get a check for ten thousand dollars," I said. "How did that turn into two hundred?"

Gary thought I should calm down. Anyway, he was busy. "Tomorrow," he said.

When I came to work the next day, Gary was still busy. I'd never known him to be that busy. I went and stood in front of his desk. I wasn't going away until I had the sale explained. Gary was very cool. He said all right, he'd draw up my figures for me.

He got out a yellow legal pad and a calculator. (These men can't talk without a calculator.) In order to make the trade



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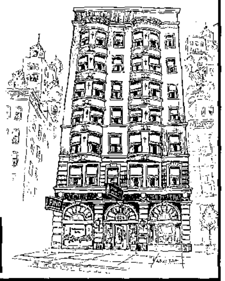

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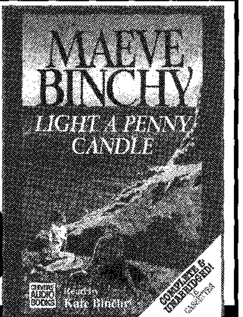

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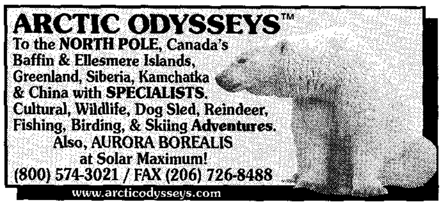

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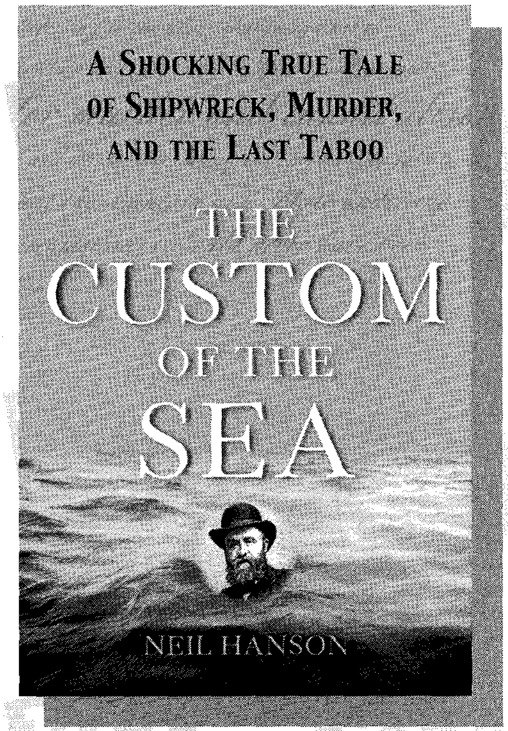
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come out to ninety-five hundred plus half the tax, as we'd originally offered, we had to let the DeVille go for cost, Gary said. Now we had no profit. So we took two thousand dollars out of the ten-thousand-dollar check that Trowbridge had coming. "Or you wouldn't have earned anything," Gary said.

I had no way of proving that this was a fairy tale, but it sure sounded like one. Otherwise, why was everybody in the dealership so excited? Salesmen who made a profit of two thousand dollars changed their own plates.

The other seven thousand dollars came out of the back end. Gary said I should be pleased, because I was going to get five per cent of what was sold in the back end. I asked what had been sold in the back end. Well, for starters, there was an extended warranty. That cost twenty-five hundred dollars.

"An extended warranty?" I said. Cadillacs come with a fifty-thousand-mile bumper-to-bumper warranty. "He's only leasing for two years. That's robbery."

"Not necessarily," Gary said. "What if he keeps the car?"

Next, I talked with the man at F. & I. He wanted to know what I was so upset about. "He's rich. He told me he makes a hundred and seventeen thousand dollars a year in interest."

"Because he's rich we have to rob him?" I asked. "You know that if he was poor you would have robbed him anyway." I got a smile.

I was angry, but I knew that to complain about how we'd treated the old man would throw up a wall between me and the people I worked with. So I tried to make a stink about how *I'd* been robbed, as, clearly, I had been.

"I caught a big fish," I said. "You gave me the head and tail."

Gary just sat there and took it. Danny Johnson came over to listen. "You wouldn't have robbed Danny like that," I said. Gary didn't say anything.

Danny was wise to me. He knew why I was upset. "You can't be a salesman, Benny," he said, "and expect to go to Heaven." ♦

BROTHERHOOD OF MAN DEPT.
From the Albany (N.Y.) Times Union.

The conflict in the Spice Islands is fueled mainly by religious antagonism between Christians and Muslims, who are roughly equal in size.

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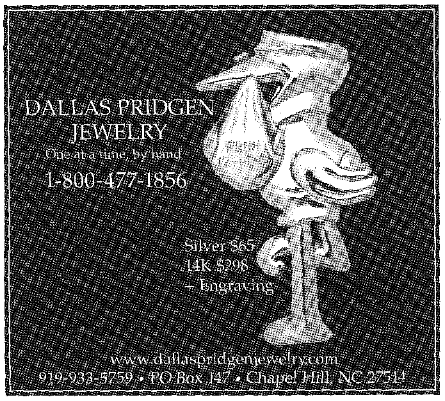

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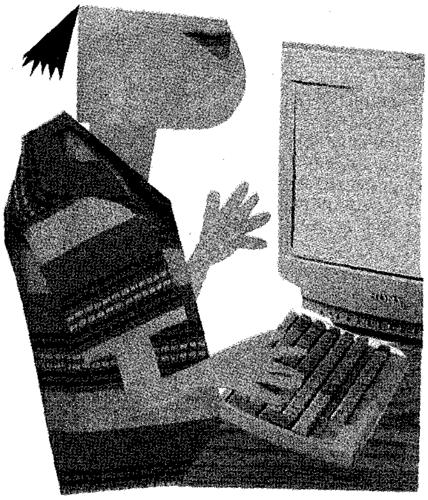
DAY JOB

Web content producer.

I was going to trade shows and selling what I called an electronic magazine on a floppy disk. They would always give me a booth—oh, she's a girl and she's kind of cute and we'll let her sell her little disks for six dollars. And so one day this guy came up to me and he said, "You know, one day people are going to be getting this information over a network and, *ka-chink*, *ka-chink*, the money's going to go right into your savings account." This guy turned out to be my investor. He had become very wealthy from selling his company to Microsoft. He insisted that I take a half-million dollars from him.



So Electronic Hollywood became incorporated in October of 1997. The first year it was like being thrown into a pool with all your clothes on and not knowing how to swim. I ended up firing my own brother. Everyone else either quit or turned against me. But then I decided I'd just try to finish production on this Internet cartoon I'd been working on called "CyberSlacker." This was like this gross R-rated cartoon with people having sex and running around with dog shit and stuff. And people just thought it was cool, I guess. More gigs started rolling in. We went back to six people, and now we're up to ten. We have illustrators and programmers and a Webmaster—it's a digital kibbutz.

It's not very bureaucratic here. I'm like the *über* person who sort of oversees everything and basically conceptualizes any new ideas for original content, the games and the cartoons. A lot of the people who actually grind the stuff out are, like, the invisible staff. My freelancers. I can't afford their health plan. I'm not interested in paying for their health plan for their little boy. You know? So I pay them a nice, decent hourly wage, and they can work at home in their underwear.

We signed a contract for "CyberSlacker." It's a licensing deal for sixteen episodes on the Internet, each four to six minutes long. The idea is that people are going to come and look at this proprietary content and then buy merchandise related to it—like T-shirts, coffee mugs, and toy stuffed cats that fart—and we'll get a nice percentage of that. The goal is that the shows get popular, and everyone wants to put 'em on TV. I'm in it to make my stuff and for people to see it and laugh. That's all. I work on the Web right now, but I'm not loyal to the Web or anything. I don't really give a shit about the Web.

I'm going to be rich. I don't have to worry about that. If I keep building the company and our revenues keep doubling and doubling—you know, last year we made fifty grand, this year we made a half a million, next year we'll make two million, the next year ten million, the next year fifty million. And then I'll sell the company, buy my house in Hollywood and buy my house in New York and marry some poor Jewish schnook who will raise my children, and life will be great. That's all I really want, you know.

—*Interviewed by John Bowe*

STEPHEN KRONINGER

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PROFILES

THE FOUNTAINHEAD

Alan Greenspan faces the biggest challenge of his career.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

At five to ten on a brisk morning a couple of months ago, Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve System, walked into Room 216 of the Hart Office Building, on Capitol Hill, holding a bunch of newspapers under one arm, the pink *Financial Times* visible on the outside. He was dressed much as he usually is: black shoes, dark socks, a gray suit with a faint-pink chalk stripe running through it, a light-blue button-down shirt, and a dark-red tie. At the age of seventy-four, Greenspan has a face that resembles that of a mountain rescue dog. Lines on his forehead are not mere wrinkles but waves etched into his skull. He has sad brown eyes, a big, bulbous nose, and a long, narrow mouth, the corners of which are often turned down, giving him a mournful cast. He walked to the front of the room, sat at the witness's table, opened a bottle of water, and poured himself a glass. The manufacturer's label had been removed from the bottle so that he wouldn't appear to be endorsing a brand. He looked as nervous as Tiger Woods on the practice tee.

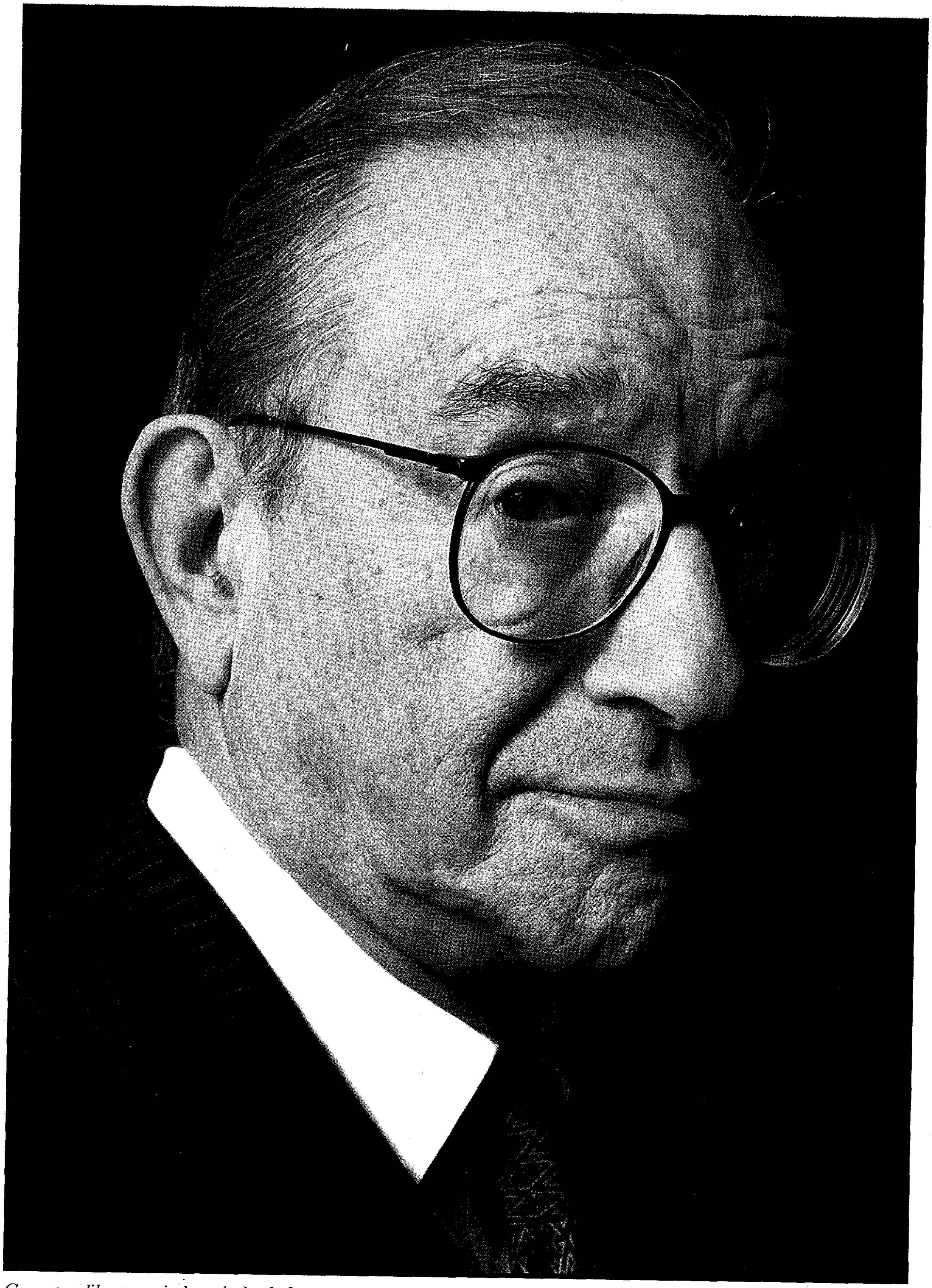
Greenspan was on Capitol Hill to deliver a twice-yearly report on monetary policy to the Senate Committee on Banking—one of the few concessions to accountability in a role that was designed to be above electoral politics. In recent years, however, Greenspan's appearances on Capitol Hill have often been less like congressional hearings than like regal audiences. This one started out along the same lines. At ten o'clock, Senator Phil Gramm, the Texas Republican who chairs the committee, got things going by reviewing the Fed's policy of raising interest rates, which began last June and has resulted in five successive hikes, each of a quarter point, the most recent of them occurring last month. "I'm not going to get into the business of trying to second-guess the monetary policy of the most successful central banker in the history of the United States," Gramm declared in his exaggerated Texas drawl. Greenspan explained why the Fed had felt compelled to increase interest rates. The economy, partly fuelled by the stock market's remarkable rise—the so-called "wealth effect"—was growing too rapidly. Although there were few signs of rising prices at the moment, the pool of available workers was dwindling, and the level of imports was growing strongly. Neither trend could continue indefinitely without sparking inflation. The Fed needed to restrain the economy, and this could be done only by raising the cost of borrowing.

The senators listened in respectful silence, but then something surprising happened. Jim Bunning, a Republican from Kentucky, started it, by labelling Greenspan's policy "misguided" and saying it could easily "become more of a threat to our economy than inflation will ever be." Paul Sarbanes, of Maryland, the senior Democrat on the committee, followed up, describing a recent visit to a job-training program in Baltimore, where he had met a troubled youth who had just found his first job. "This young fellow, he's far removed from the wealth effect," Sarbanes said. "He's barely struggling to get into a job situation. Now, what's going to happen here?" Other senators began to grumble, too, and even Gramm ended up sounding a semi-critical note. "I think people hear what you are saying and conclude that you believe that equities are overvalued," he told Greenspan. "I would guess that equity values are not only not overvalued but may still be undervalued." The Fed chairman stared through thick spectacles, his hands clasped in front of him. Occasionally, he appeared to gulp for air, like a goldfish. At one point, he tried to engage Bunning, but he was quickly interrupted. "If we get prime interest rates at double digits, we are going to stop this economy in its tracks," the Kentucky Republican snapped. "I don't want to see that happen on your watch, and I surely don't want to see it happen on my watch." Greenspan realized it was hopeless. "I appreciate that, Senator," he said quietly. "I have the same view."

In the weeks following the hearing, as the stock markets shot up and down like a stunt plane with a drunken pilot in the cockpit, criticism of Greenspan spread to the media. The editorial pages of the *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, which usually agree on little, both questioned the Fed's logic in raising interest rates; John Crudele, whose financial column in the New York *Post* is widely read on Wall Street, went so far as to suggest that the Fed chairman should resign while the going was good. The attacks on Greenspan, who has been in his job since August, 1987, didn't go unnoticed. A couple of weeks ago, I ran into a senior Fed official with more than twenty years' experience and asked him to compare Greenspan's current situation with that of October, 1987, when the stock market crashed. "I think he is facing his greatest challenge now," the official said. "We are suggesting, as an institution, that the stock market is too high, and that we are going to rein in inflation that's not there yet. What he did in 1987 was important, but it was what you would expect a central banker to do—try to calm the markets and assure financial stability. This is much less straightforward." While I was considering that statement, the official added another variable to the equation: "We've lost Bob Rubin as Treasury Secretary, and Larry Summers"—Robert Rubin's replacement—"able man that he is, doesn't have the same credibility or experience. That leaves Alan with his hands on the wheel. He is really exposed."

Greenspan may be exposed, but he is also a survivor, perhaps the greatest survivor in all Washington. This past January, President Clinton nominated him for a fourth four-year term as Fed chairman. In length of service, Greenspan has now surpassed all his predecessors save two.

CORBIS OUTLINE



Greenspan likes to remind people that he has been a daily observer of the economy for fifty years. Photograph by Michael O'Neill.

Assuming he remains healthy—and he has never had a major illness—he will complete his fourth term at the start of 2004, when he will be seventy-seven. "He strikes me as being completely unfazed by critical editorials," Roger Ferguson, the Fed's vice-chairman, who has served alongside Greenspan for two and a half years, told me recently. "He is clearly a man who understands that he has been put in place by the President and Congress to execute a mission. Sometimes it will make him a cover boy and sometimes performing the role will get people saying things that aren't so positive." The veteran NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell, who has been married to Greenspan for three years, made a similar point when I spoke with her on the telephone a few weeks ago. "When he made the decision to accept renomination, which was a great honor, he knew that at that moment things were as good as one could imagine them being," Mitchell told me. Far from becoming disheartened by the criticism, Mitchell said, Greenspan thrives on it. "Other people would be daunted by the ups and downs, by the fact that you are only as good or bad as your last decision, that you can't ever rest on your track record. I would find that more than a little frightening. He finds it exhilarating."

"Exhilarating" is not a word many people associate with Greenspan, but there is more to him than the lugubrious figure who appears on C-SPAN and CNBC. He was born on March 6, 1926, in New York City. His parents were both Jewish: Herbert Greenspan, a self-educated financier, and Rose Goldsmith, a fun-loving girl of seventeen who liked to sing and dance. Three years after Greenspan was born, Herbert and Rose divorced. Rose moved back in with her parents, in Washington Heights, and took a job in a furniture store across the Harlem River, in the Bronx. Greenspan was brought up as the only child of a single mother, to whom he remained devoted. (He called her practically every day at seven in the morning until her death, in 1995.) His cousin Wesley Halpert lived nearby, and the two boys would spend hours imitating Laurel and Hardy and playing ball. A few weeks ago, I visited Halpert, who, at seventy-six, is a busy dentist on the East Side. He turned out to be a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a full head of white hair, and the same calm presence and measured way of speaking as his famous cousin. After doing his last fillings of the day, Halpert sat down and talked about Washington Heights before the Second World War. Then, as now, it was a neighborhood of working-class immigrants and their children. Most of the immigrants had come from Europe, rather than the Caribbean and Latin America, as is the case today, but the ethnic lines were just as sharp. "We were all afraid of the Irish kids," Halpert told me. "One day, we were invaded by a bunch of them. Alan and I were playing ball against a wall. They were all bigger and older than we were, and there were a lot of them. They started tormenting us, and Alan sailed right into them, his fists going like this"—the old man pumped his fists up and down like a young Mike Tyson—"and we chased them away."

A photograph of Greenspan from his days at George Washington High School, on West 192nd Street, shows a tall, loose-limbed youth, with dark wavy hair, in an old-fashioned swimsuit. He didn't display much interest in his studies except for arithmetic. "He knew all the baseball averages," Halpert recalled. "He loved numbers." Most kids in Washington Heights supported the New York Giants, but Greenspan was a Brooklyn Dodgers fan. Music was another passion, which he inherited from his mother. At family gatherings, Greenspan was a star attraction. His uncle, Halpert's father, would give him a dime to sing the Depression song "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" "He'd sing it in a lovely boy's voice," Halpert said. When Greenspan finished high school, he applied to Juilliard and spent two years there, studying the saxophone and the clarinet. In 1944, at the end of his sophomore year, he dropped out and decided to try to make some money by playing professionally.

It was the beginning of the bebop era. Jazz orchestras, featuring virtuosos like Dizzy Gillespie, were starting to emerge; and some of the old swing bands were forced to update themselves. One such outfit was the Henry Jerome Band, which played regularly at the Childs restaurant in the Paramount Theatre building, in Times Square. The band's manager, who also played in its horn section, was a young law student named Leonard Garment—the same Leonard Garment who went on to become President Nixon's counsel during Watergate. Garment still recalls the day when Alan Greenspan showed up at the Paramount. "He had exactly the same face, a slightly ironic, self-measuring smile, very interior-oriented," Garment told me a few weeks ago. "I played jazz tenor saxophone. Alan came into the band and played the other tenor saxophone, and he also played the clarinet and the flute. He was very good, very solid." Greenspan stayed with the band a year, during which time it alternated between touring and playing in New York. Even on the road, he was quiet and reserved. He put his interest in numbers to good use, assisting Henry Jerome, the bandleader, with the bookkeeping, and aiding some of his fellow-players with their income taxes, always a problem for itinerant musicians. In other areas, too, he helped to keep his colleagues in line. Above the Childs restaurant was a Walgreen drugstore that had a row of phone booths. Some of the musicians used the booths to smoke marijuana, and the drugstore manager would complain to Garment. When Garment didn't have time to retrieve the miscreants himself, he would dispatch his fellow tenor sax to do the job. "I'd say, 'Alan, could you get some of those guys down here? Tell them it's time to play and to stop smoking,'" Garment recalled.

Greenspan enjoyed the show-business life, but soon realized it wasn't a viable career. "I was a pretty good amateur musician, but I was average as a professional, and I was aware of that because you learn pretty quickly how good some professional musicians are," he told Steven Beckner, a journalist who wrote a book about Greenspan. "I realized it's innate. You either have it or you don't." During his time in the band, Greenspan had started reading books about business and finance, and he found them fascinating. In 1945, he quit and started taking classes at New York University's business school, which was then called the School of Commerce.

Back in the forties, N.Y.U. was not the vibrant, cosmopolitan institution it is now. The economics department, in particular, was known as a citadel of conservatism. Ludwig Von Mises, the Austrian scourge of socialism, taught there, as did

Greenspan (far right) at the 1957 wedding of his former wife, Joan Mitchell. Ayn Rand, one of his mentors, is seated front left.

COURTESY JOAN MITCHELL BLUMENTHAL

Walter Spahr, the head of the National Committee to Return to the Gold Standard. Robert Kavesh, who went on to become a professor of economics at N.Y.U., was in the year behind Greenspan. "We met when I got out of the Navy, in 1946," Kavesh told me recently. "We spent a lot of time together at lunchtime. We would walk around Washington Square. Picture multitudes of former servicemen standing in the sunshine, and just a few women. That's how it was. Alan was always painfully shy, and I think it hurt him with the girls. Let's just say he wasn't too successful. He was a very quiet person. He was interested in most of the things people in their early twenties are interested in: he was interested in baseball; he was interested in girls; and he was also interested in economics, which was a very exciting subject in those days."

It was during one of Walter Spahr's antediluvian lectures that Kavesh noticed Greenspan ignoring the professor and reading "The Economics of John Maynard Keynes," by Dudley Dillard, one of the first books about the legendary British economist to be published in America. Keynes, whose theories were designed to justify active management of the economy by the government, was then anathema at N.Y.U., and at most other American universities, but Kavesh was not surprised to see his friend reading about him. "He was trying to absorb everything and every point of view," Kavesh told me. "He loved economics, and he loved those simple diagrams of savings and investment that really were the Keynesian contribution. We would talk, and he would get truly animated. He was not a from-birth conservative, not at all. In fact, it was presumed that everyone in our circle was a Democrat, because the role of government in economic life had been well established by the war, the financing of the war, and the ending of the Depression. We were truly all Keynesians." In 1948, Greenspan graduated summa cum laude, and although he received his master's from N.Y.U. two years later and also enrolled in night classes at Columbia, he showed little interest in pursuing an academic career. (He finally obtained his Ph.D., from N.Y.U., in 1977, after submitting a thesis on the stock market and investment which he had started working on more than twenty years previously.) "It was presumed if you studied economics seriously in those days that you would go on to be a teacher," Kavesh said. "There was a hierarchy. The highest level was to teach; second, to work for government; third, sully your hands in the business world. Alan chose the last approach."

Greenspan likes to remind people that he has been observing the United States economy on a daily basis for more than half a century. In 1948, he took a job with the National Industrial Conference Board, a New York research group financed by big corporations. One of the businessmen who called for advice about the economy was William Townsend, a veteran Wall Street bond trader. Townsend was impressed by Greenspan, and in 1953 he asked him to join his firm as a partner. The offer came with an annual salary of around six thousand dollars, not much money even then, but it was a partnership, and Greenspan accepted. The decision made his career.

REMEMBER, PHIL: CATCH AND RELEASE.
ANIMALS FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF PEOPLE

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During the next two decades, he built Townsend-Greenspan & Company into a thriving economics consultancy, with a roster of corporate clients that included Alcoa, U.S. Steel, and J. P. Morgan. (Townsend died in 1958, but his young partner left his name on the door.)

From the beginning, Greenspan's approach to the economy was heavily empirical. Townsend-Greenspan analyzed the various economic statistics that emerged on a daily basis from the Commerce Department and other government agencies, then provided its clients with a judgment about what they implied for the future growth of the economy. Greenspan became an expert on the national income accounts, the complicated statistical framework that the government uses to calculate the gross domestic product, but he also studied the individual sectors that his clients operated in, such as steel and banking. "I was at various times a specialist in virtually every major industry and generally knowledgeable about the remainder," he told Lawrence B. Lindsey, who was a Fed governor from 1991 to 1997. "When you go through every industry over your lifetime, you should know how the system works."

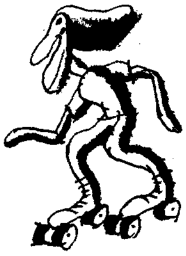
In many ways, Greenspan's job hasn't changed much since the fifties. He is still paid to analyze economic trends and predict future developments. The difference is that, along with other members of the Federal Open Market Committee, which is the policymaking arm of the Federal Reserve System, he now gets to set interest rates, not merely analyze them. Every morning, Greenspan is picked up at his home, in Northwest Washington, by his official car, a black Mercury Grand Marquis, and driven to the Fed's headquarters, in Foggy Bottom. When he's not in meetings, Greenspan spends much of his time alone in a big, bright office overlooking Constitution Avenue, doing what he likes best: studying and thinking. On average, he spends two or three hours each day doing his own economic research, and at least another two or three hours reading reports prepared by the Fed staff and others. A visitor to his office earlier this year discovered Greenspan knee-deep in economic statistics dating back to the nineteen-fifties. He explained that he was trying to revamp a forty-year-old mathematical model that Townsend-Greenspan had used to estimate the total realized capital gains on sales of existing homes. (The figure is significant to economists because people can use money they make from home sales to finance extra consumption.) Home sales aren't Greenspan's only research interest. Last year, he and Darrel Cohen, a staff economist at the Fed, published a paper in *The Review of Economics and Statistics* which detailed a new way to predict the total number of motor vehicles sold each year in the United States—surely the first time a Fed chairman has published a refereed academic paper while in office.

Greenspan's knowledge of the economy regularly surprises his colleagues. "I remember one instance when spring floods were making many of the bridges on the Mississippi River unusable," Lindsey wrote in a recent book, "Economic Puppetmasters." "At the time of the weekly Board of Governors meeting, the U.S. economy was literally linked together by a single bridge. Greenspan not only knew the location of the bridge, but also the various reroutings that could be used to get merchandise there." Greenspan isn't just a fact gerbil. (Data by itself is vacuous, he often says.) Like all good economists, he looks at a wide range of numbers and then tries to find a conceptual structure that will explain them. "He's not a monetarist, he's not a Keynesian—he's himself," William McDonough, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, told me when I visited his office on Liberty Street a few weeks ago. "It's not just a tremendous interest in the data for its own sake but, rather, he draws conclusions from the data which are insightful and unique." Many economists rely on complex computer models to predict the future, but Greenspan has long been suspicious of such methods. Back in the sixties, Townsend-Greenspan acquired a new computer with a memory of sixteen kilobytes, which was then considered enormous, to use for economic forecasting. "We thought we could really pin down the business cycle," Greenspan told a meeting of business economists a few years back. Unfortunately, the economy didn't coöperate. "It moved. . . . It wigged when it should have wagged." Greenspan drew an unequivocal lesson from this experience. "That crazy economy out there doesn't stand still long enough for us to get a fix on it. . . . Our computer models are running at an accelerating pace, but the economy manages to keep that much ahead of us."

As 1952 began, Greenspan had a good job, a duplex apartment in Forest Hills, which he shared with his mother, and a promising future. By the end of the year, his mother had moved out and been replaced by a wife, a pretty young painter named Joan Mitchell. Last month, I visited Joan Mitchell Blumenthal, as she is now called, at the East Side apartment she shares with her second husband, Allan Blumenthal, a psychiatrist. At the age of seventy, she is still strikingly attractive, with blond hair, blue eyes, and a reserved manner. She sat down in a leather armchair, quieted her toy poodle, pulled her knees up beneath her, and recounted meeting Greenspan, on a blind date organized by a friend, shortly after she moved to New York after graduating from U.C.L.A.: "The first date was lovely because during our first telephone conversation he laid out three things we could do. One of them was a sporting event, another was a Broadway show, and the third was a concert at Carnegie Hall involving some Bach. I said, 'Without a doubt, the concert at Carnegie Hall. I've been dying to go there all my life.' We went, and it was very enjoyable. We talked a great deal about music. He told me about the Henry Jerome Band and all that, and later, in fact, we went to the hotel where the band was playing, and I met the band members. They told me they knew Alan wouldn't stay with them forever because he was just too good at doing their taxes."

Mitchell Blumenthal found Greenspan smart, sweet, and charming. Following an eight-month courtship, they got married in a small ceremony at the Pierre Hotel; but after the wedding things didn't turn out as planned. "I can only tell you that it had nothing to do with respect for each other, or even fondness for each other, but a real difference over what we wanted out of life," Mitchell Blumenthal said. "I found life a little dull. I wanted to have fun; he wanted to play golf. I didn't want to live in Forest Hills; he did want to live in Forest Hills. It was like that." After living together for ten months, the couple separated amicably, and they still talk now and again. In the early fifties, the only ground for divorce in New York State was infidelity, and neither Greenspan nor Mitchell Blumenthal wanted that. "We found out that you could get an annulment much quicker and more cheaply than a divorce," Mitchell Blumenthal explained. "Which is why, I think, for a long time after he became famous people didn't know that he'd been married before."

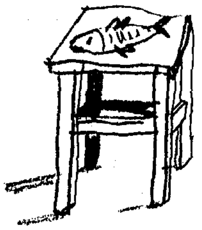
The failure of the marriage left a lasting mark on Greenspan—it would be more than forty years before he remarried—but it was through Mitchell Blumenthal that he met a woman who became his close friend and intellectual mentor: Ayn Rand, the Russian-born novelist, libertarian, and libertine. A couple that Mitchell Blumenthal knew, Barbara and Nathaniel Branden, were friends of Rand in California. Shortly after Mitchell Blumenthal moved to New York, the Brandens and Rand did likewise. Rand, already famous for her 1943 novel, "The Fountainhead," took an apartment on East Thirty-sixth Street, and continued work on "Atlas Shrugged." Later, she moved to a larger apartment a couple of blocks south. Every Saturday night, she would invite a group of friends to her apartment to read and discuss her latest writings. (As ironic as ever, Rand later dubbed the right-wing reading group the Collective.) Mitchell Blumenthal tried to interest Greenspan in the gatherings, but he didn't start attending regularly until after the two of them had split up. In "My Years with Ayn Rand," a memoir published last year, Nathaniel Branden gives a memorable portrait of Greenspan as he appeared to Rand and her acolytes: "He was tall and solidly built, with black hair, dark horn-rim glasses, and a propensity for dark, funereal suits. At age twenty-six, he was somberness incarnate, looking chronically weary, resigned, and unhappy. Barbara, Ayn, Frank"—O'Connor, Rand's long-suffering husband—"and I once encountered him as he and Joan were coming out of an elevator. 'He looks like an undertaker,' Ayn commented."



Greenspan has never been shy about acknowledging his intellectual debt to Rand. "What she did—through long discussions and lots of arguments into the night—was to make me think why capitalism is not only efficient and practical, but also moral," he told a reporter from the *Times* in 1974. When Greenspan met Rand, he saw himself as a logical positivist, believing that all moral codes were arbitrary human constructs that cannot be verified. Rand regarded logical positivism as a dead end. In her controversial philosophy of objectivism, she argued that capitalism was innately superior to other socioeconomic systems, such as feudalism and socialism, because it was based on voluntary exchange on the part of rational, self-interested individuals. The laudatory descriptions of capitalism contained in the drafts of "Atlas Shrugged" struck the young Greenspan as inspired. "Ayn, this is *incredible*," he blurted out at one meeting described by Branden. "No one has ever dramatized what industrial achievement actually means as you have."

Rand, for her part, initially acted coolly towards the newest member of her coterie. "The trouble with A.G. is, he thinks Henry Luce is important," she said on one occasion. "Do you think Alan might basically be a social climber?" she inquired on another. Eventually, Rand was won over by the clarity of Greenspan's mind and the breadth of his knowledge. "It took a long time to impress that lady, but he did it, and in fact she once told me, some years later, that he was perhaps the most sensitive reader from a literary point of view that she'd ever had," Mitchell Blumenthal said. Rand and Greenspan became close, though, contrary to speculation, they never had a sexual relationship. (Rand did have young lovers, Nathaniel Branden among them.) As the years went by, many members of Rand's circle split from her in rancorous circumstances, but Greenspan continued to see her regularly until her death, in 1982. Even today, he speaks highly of Rand. "She did things in her personal life which I would not approve of, but ideas stand on their own," he said to one recent visitor. "What was a syllogism back then is a syllogism today."

When Robert Kavesh, Greenspan's college friend, returned to New York, in 1956, after getting his Ph.D. and teaching at Dartmouth, he was surprised to find Greenspan's "whole approach to economics changed" almost beyond recognition. "We were fast friends once again, but he was trying to sell me that Ayn Rand philosophy with no success—not my stuff," Kavesh told me. "He had become a markets, markets, markets person: what you need is pure, unadulterated laissez-faire." In the early sixties, Greenspan contributed some economics articles to *The Objectivist Newsletter*, which, to this day, make provocative reading. In one piece Greenspan attacked efforts by the government to restrain corporate monopolies, arguing that "the entire antitrust system must be opened for review"; in another he said that the welfare state, "stripped of its academic jargon . . . is nothing more than a mechanism by which governments confiscate the wealth of productive members of a society to support a wide variety of welfare schemes"; and in a third article, lambasting the very idea of government regulation, he maintained that capitalism "holds integrity and trustworthiness as cardinal virtues and makes them pay off in the marketplace, thus demanding that men survive by means of virtues, not of vices. It is this superlatively moral system that the welfare statists propose to improve upon by means of preventive law, snooping bureaucrats, and the chronic goad of fear."



Quotes like these are hard to square with contemporary descriptions of Greenspan from his colleagues and friends. (Alice Rivlin, a Fed governor from June, 1996, to July, 1999: "He's not very ideological." Andrea Mitchell: "He is not doctrinaire." William McDonough: "Broad-gauged. He would have been the perfect P.P.E."—politics, philosophy, and economics—"candidate at Oxbridge.") One possible explanation for the difference between Greenspan circa 1960 and Greenspan circa 2000 is that his views have changed. "I think what's happened is that he has come to see that life is a little more complicated than Ayn Rand had pictured," Robert Kavesh said to me. "If you've ever read her stuff, there's black and white, there's good and evil, there's absolutism and relativism. Relativism is the worst thing you could be convicted of. I think Alan has come to realize that life is sort of gray in many respects." The problem with Kavesh's argument is that its subject doesn't agree with it. During a recent conversation with a fellow-economist, Greenspan insisted that his general view of how the world works has not changed much at all since the nineteen-fifties. He also warned his interlocutor to distinguish carefully between what he believes personally and how he acts as chairman of the Fed.

That was sound advice. In an idealized free market, of the type Rand rhapsodized about, there would be *no* need for a central bank, let alone active economic management of the type associated with Keynes and his followers. But Greenspan has not survived as long as he has in Washington by being perceived as a right-wing ideologue. On the contrary, he has cultivated an image as a pragmatic policymaker who is willing (and able) to work with people of all political stripes. A good example of this was his reaction to the Mexican financial crisis, which erupted in early 1995. With the Mexican government struggling to pay its debts, and billions of dollars of Wall Street money at risk, many of Greenspan's fellow-Republicans argued against a bailout, because it would only encourage investors to act equally rashly in the future—a problem known to economists as "moral hazard." Greenspan privately supported some of these arguments, but he nonetheless agreed, along with Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and Lawrence Summers, who was then a Treasury under-secretary, to a rescue package for the Mexican government that included some nineteen billion dollars guaranteed by the United States. (All the money was later repaid, with interest.) "His view, which I think was right, was that what we did in Mexico had a moral-hazard aspect to it that was unattractive," Rubin told me recently when I visited his office at Citigroup, where he is now a senior executive. "On the other hand, life is very often a choice between unattractive alternatives, and the question is which is the least unattractive. His view there, and it was also Larry's view and my view, was that the moral-hazard aspect was a by-product of doing something else so important—avoiding Mexico going into default, with possible contagion effects—that you simply had to accept the negative effect in order to get the greater good." Rubin tossed a small glass globe from hand to hand. "That's a mode of thinking that, unfortunately, is very hard for some people in Washington to relate to."

When the financial crisis spread to Asia, in the summer of 1997, Greenspan again rejected arguments that the United States government should do nothing. Together with Rubin and Summers, he encouraged Western and Japanese banks to roll over Korea's debts and helped persuade a reluctant Congress to approve a big increase in United States contributions to the International Monetary Fund; emergency loans worth tens of billions of dollars were extended to the stricken Asian countries, most of which are now enjoying economic recoveries. According to Rubin, Greenspan's ability to work effectively with him and Summers depended on the willingness of all three to set ideology aside and focus on practicalities. "Larry and Alan are both very strong personalities, smart as hell, and they both have views. I have views, too," Rubin said. "Yet it worked out remarkably well, and it was very important. People don't realize how close we came to disaster. The whole system almost came off the rails."

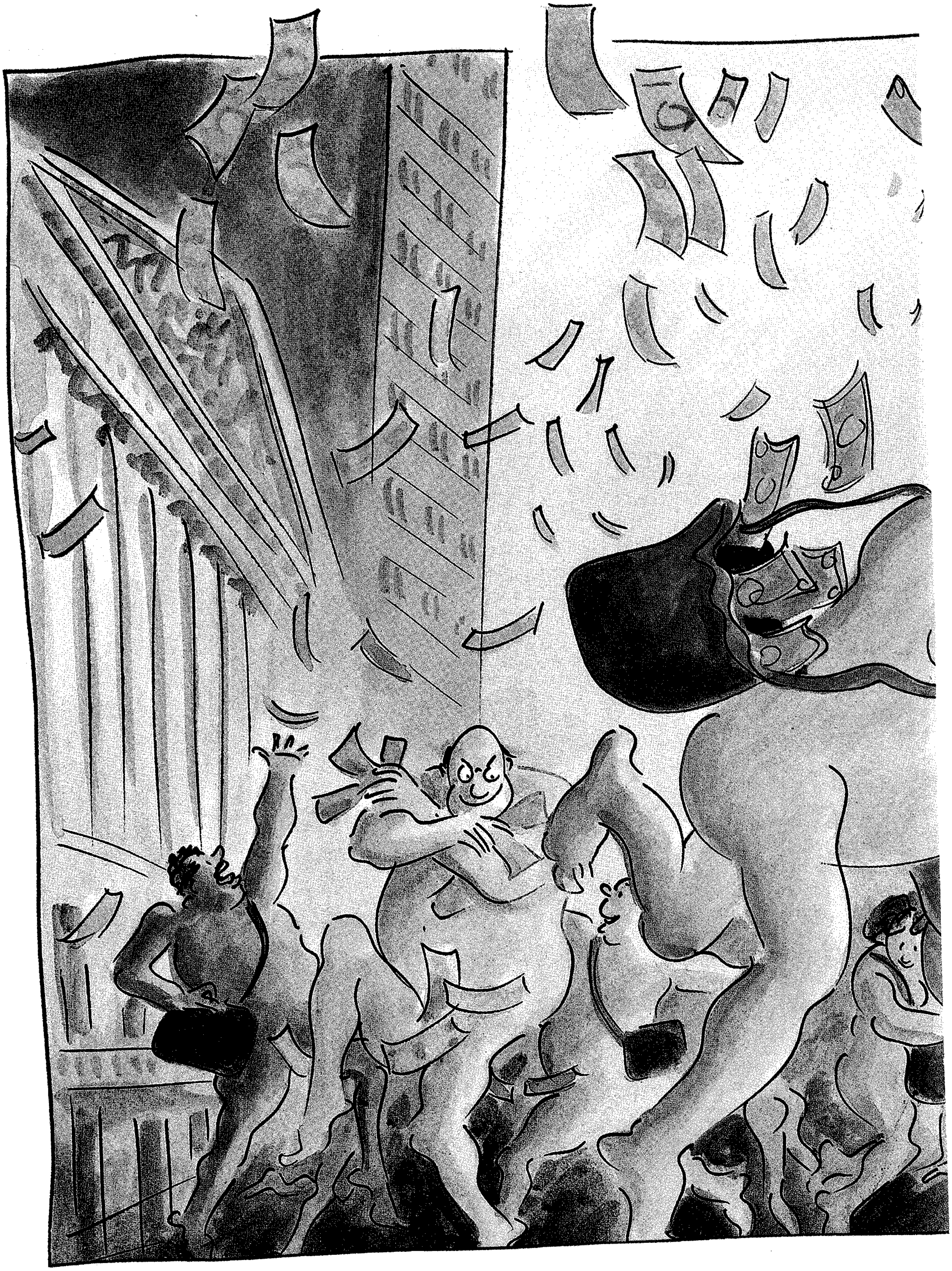
The most striking example of Greenspan's intellectual flexibility was his willingness to keep interest rates low in the second half of the last decade. Until a few years ago, most economists, Greenspan included, believed the maximum rate at which the economy could expand without sparking an upturn in inflation was about two and a half per cent a year. Between the fourth quarter of 1995 and the fourth quarter of 1999, the economy grew at an annual rate of more than four per cent, but it was not until last June that the Fed raised interest rates, and even then it acted gradually. As a result of this permissiveness, all sorts of good things happened: wages of nonsupervisory workers jumped significantly, thereby spreading some of the spoils of prosperity; unemployment fell to levels not seen since 1970, and among blacks and Hispanics the jobless rate fell to all-time lows; and inflation, far from rising, as the old theories predicted it should, fell. This upsurge in non-inflationary growth was facilitated by economic troubles abroad and falling commodity prices, but the key factor at home was a doubling in the growth rate of productivity—the amount of output produced by each worker—to three and a half per cent a year. Greenspan didn't engineer this transformation, but he was one of the first economists to recognize it as more than a temporary blip. As long ago as 1997, he had suggested that what was happening in the economy, with the proliferation of information technology, and the Internet in particular, may turn out to be a "once or twice a century" occurrence. Under his leadership, the Fed allowed the productivity resurgence to take place, and did not interrupt it out of a fear that rapid economic growth would spark inflation, which a more hidebound central bank would have done. "I think that's his greatest achievement," William McDonough, the New York Fed president, who has been vice-chairman of the Federal Open Market Committee since August, 1993, told me. "Now, one can argue that it's been the F.O.M.C.'s greatest achievement, but the fact is Alan's been not only the chairman but the intellectual leader."

The Fed's policy of watchful inaction helped to sustain a virtuous circle in the economy. With interest rates low and consumers optimistic, American firms invested at record rates, especially in information technology. All this new investment paid off in higher productivity growth, which, in turn, led to increased profits, thereby encouraging firms to invest even more. This self-reinforcing process produced the longest economic expansion on record, but eventually it also presented Greenspan with an acute dilemma: Had it gone too far, producing an economy that was performing, in some ways, too well?

One day in 1966, Greenspan was walking along Broad Street, near his office, when he ran into Leonard Garment, whom he hadn't seen since the two of them played tenor sax in the Henry Jerome Band. Garment was now a successful Wall Street lawyer, and one of his legal partners was Richard Nixon, who had moved to New York from Los Angeles after losing the California governor's race in 1962. Garment saw himself as a Democrat, but he had become involved in the effort to launch a "new Nixon." Greenspan and he agreed to have lunch at the Bankers Club. There, Greenspan explained to Garment the finer points of financial futures, and Garment asked Greenspan if he would like to meet Nixon. "They met, and I sat with them for an hour or so, over lunch," Garment recalled. "Nixon was very interested. He made it clear to me that he wanted Greenspan to become involved." It wasn't the first occasion on which Greenspan had flirted with Presidential politics. Back in the early fifties, Arthur Burns, who had been Greenspan's mentor at Columbia, had offered him a job on the Council of Economic Advisers, which Burns headed during the first Eisenhower Administration. Greenspan decided against taking it. But now he agreed to join Nixon's policy team, which was based in New York, in a building on Park Avenue. For the following twenty years, he was to spend his time moving back and forth between Wall Street finance and Washington politics.

Greenspan's province extended well beyond economics, to areas such as housing, crime, and welfare. He even cranked up his office computer and developed a mathematical model of the electoral college, which was used for political strategizing. When Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey, in 1968, he put Greenspan in charge of budget negotiations during the transition. Many observers thought Greenspan would end up as White House budget director, but he returned to Wall Street instead. "Nixon wanted Alan to come in—he could have had a substantial appointment," Martin Anderson, a fellow Ayn Rand enthusiast who was also a member of the policy team, told me last month from his office at the Hoover Institution, where he is a fellow. "He said no. He wanted to stay with his company." I asked Anderson about Greenspan's politics in those days. "His views were exactly the same as they are now. They haven't changed at all," he replied. "He's a Greenspan conservative, which means that on most issues he would be called a conservative Republican, but on some issues he wouldn't." A little-known example of the latter, Anderson went on, was Greenspan's role in the ending of the draft. After Nixon was elected, he set up a commission, under former Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates, Jr., to study the issue. Greenspan was appointed to the commission, and he argued for radical reform. When the commission's report was published, in 1970, it recommended an

"My attorney says your attorney had to take the bar exam three times."



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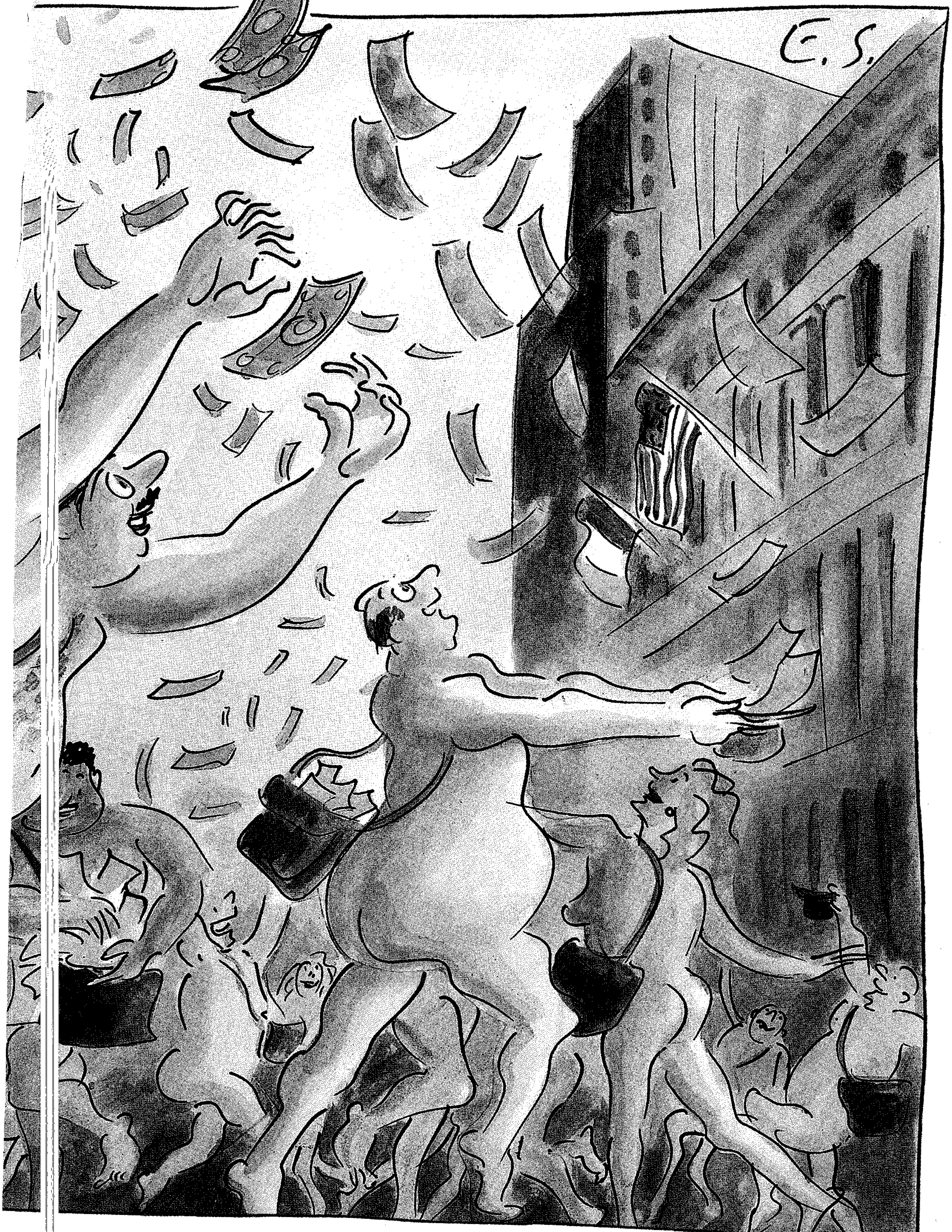

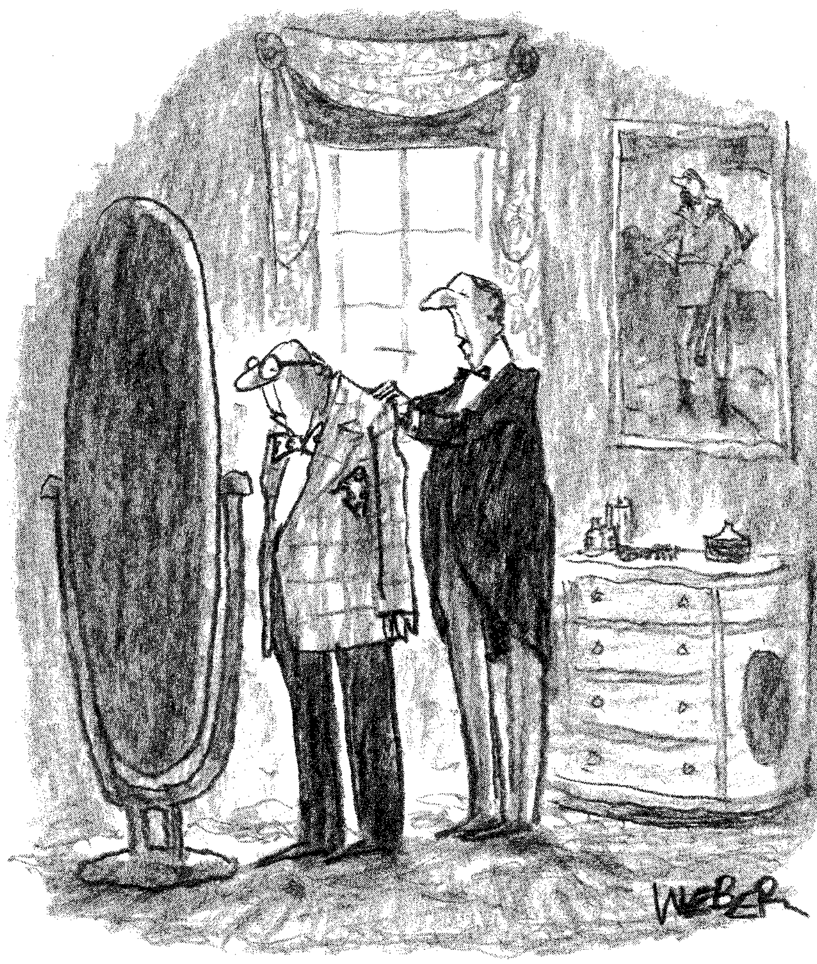

"I regret to inform your lordship that I have been offered, and have accepted, an attractive position in valet parking."

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all-volunteer military, giving Nixon the political cover he needed to eventually end the draft.

In July, 1974, Herbert Stein, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, resigned, and Greenspan was nominated to replace him. But Watergate was in full swing, and the nomination languished. By late summer, it seemed likely that Vice-President Gerald Ford would soon replace Nixon. Ford asked William Seidman, one of his senior aides, whether he should proceed with Greenspan's nomination. Seidman, who later headed the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and is now a commentator for CNBC, met Greenspan, and approved him. "I thought he was a good economist and a Republican economist, which there weren't a lot of in those days," Seidman said to me last month. "He assured me that he was pure economist and not politician. It turned out that he was a better politician than any of us thought."

A couple of weeks before Nixon resigned, Greenspan went to see Ford. "We spent about an hour together, and, to be honest with you, I was very impressed with him," the former President told me when I called him at his office in Rancho Mirage, California, a couple of weeks ago. "I could tell he was very thoughtful. I just took an instant liking to him. It turned out to be a good judgment."

The Ford Administration soon found itself faced with the deepest recession since the thirties: inflation was high and unemployment was rising sharply. Some people in the White House were calling for big tax cuts to get the economy moving, but Greenspan opposed such a policy, on the ground that it would increase the budget deficit, which was already at a record level. The White House budget office put together two possible fiscal packages. Ford recalled for me the debates that followed: "Alan analyzed them and said, 'Look here, if you take the conservative one, you will be accused of being too tightfisted, but in the long run, if you are reëlected, you will have good economic times in 1977, '78. On the other hand, if you take the more expansive choice you may get some good times in 1976, but if you are reëlected you will pay a penalty, because you will go through another economic downturn in 1977, '78.' I said to him, 'Well, what do you recommend?' He said, 'I think it would be wise to take the more conservative one, even though you'll probably get some politically unattractive statistical data in September or October, just before the election.' We took the conservative approach, and, sure enough, in October unemployment had a little upshot and things didn't look so encouraging." There was a pause on the line, then Ford continued. "I happen to think that was the major reason we lost the election. In November, if you go back and look at the records, the situation turned very optimistic." I asked Ford, who lost to Jimmy Carter by just two per cent of the vote, whether he regretted following Greenspan's advice. "I have no regrets," he replied, his voice firm. "My conscience has always been clear. It was one of those gambles. It didn't turn out politically, but it was good for the country."

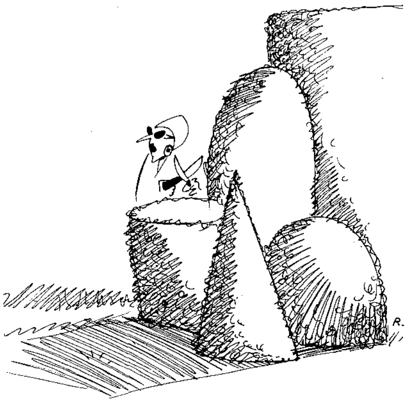
A quarter of a century after Greenspan's advice may have cost Ford his reëlection, the two are firm friends, and occasional golf partners. Ford, a keen player, told me that Greenspan, who swings left-handed, "isn't a bad golfer for a person who doesn't play very much." Greenspan has always respected Ford's honesty and integrity. He has told friends that, of the five Presidents he has dealt with, Ford was the one he felt closest to.

After the 1976 election, Greenspan returned to Wall Street, but he continued to dabble in Republican politics. When Ronald Reagan became President, in 1981, he appointed Greenspan to his Economic Policy Advisory Board, a body of outside experts which also included Arthur Burns, Milton Friedman, George Shultz, William Simon, and Paul McCracken. As Martin Anderson, who at the time was Assistant to the President for Policy Development, tells it, Greenspan and the others played an important role in persuading Reagan to stick with his controversial policy of tax cuts despite the enormous budget deficits they produced. “After a few months went by, Don Regan”—the Treasury Secretary—“and David Stockman”—the budget director—“became very concerned about the growing deficit,” Anderson told me. “They wanted to slow down the tax cut, delay it, stop it. So I would go out and call George Shultz, and he’d call a meeting, and all these guys would come in. They’d gather in the Roosevelt Room. The President would come in and wink at Arthur Burns, tap Friedman on the shoulder, laugh with Alan Greenspan, and talk a bit. They were his old friends. They all sat there and told him two things: one, he was a terrific President; two, to continue what he was doing. It was the right thing to do. It was the only way to get out of the recession. Then they’d all leave, and we’d go back and start over again.” Greenspan and his colleagues believed they were advocating big tax cuts matched by equally big spending cuts, but that was never a realistic possibility. The tax cuts went ahead, Congress refused to cut spending significantly, and the budget deficit exploded; by the time Greenspan became Fed chairman, in August of 1987, it was running at more than two hundred billion dollars a year.

Greenspan was nominated to the Fed post by President Reagan, who acted on the advice of his then Treasury Secretary, James Baker. Baker was yet another political heavyweight whom Greenspan had cultivated. His ability to impress influential people, although rarely remarked upon, is, in many ways, the key to his success. Anderson, who watched Greenspan work with two Presidents, puts it down to a combination of brains, common sense, and trustworthiness. “In Washington, that’s golden,” Anderson told me. “If you get someone who’s smart, who recommends things that work, and who can be trusted, he’ll stay forever. I don’t care what party he’s in.” William Seidman, who worked with Greenspan during the Ford and Bush Administrations, offered a tarter explanation. “He has the best bedside manner I’ve ever seen,” Seidman said. “He’s very nonconfrontational, but also very good at persuading people. Part of his mystique, I think, is that he’s hard to understand, but that also gives him a certain genius aspect.”

It was Greenspan’s cozy links with the rich and powerful which caused the most embarrassing incident of his career. In 1984, the New York law firm of Paul Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison hired him to conduct a financial study of one of its clients, the fast-growing Lincoln Savings & Loan Association, of Irvine, California. Lincoln, which was owned by Charles Keating, Jr., an Arizona entrepreneur, wanted federal banking regulators to exempt it from a rule that limited the percentage of depositors’ money it could channel into real-estate development and other direct investments. In February, 1985, Greenspan wrote a letter to the regulators in which he described Lincoln’s management as “seasoned and expert in selecting and making direct investments,” and praised it for having “restored the association to a vibrant and healthy state, with a strong net worth position.” Lincoln didn’t receive the exemption it wanted, but it continued to grow rapidly and to invest in risky areas. In April, 1989, it was taken over by the government at a cost to taxpayers of two billion dollars. “Of course I’m embarrassed by my failure to foresee what eventually transpired,” Greenspan told the *Times* a few months after Lincoln went belly-up. “I was wrong about Lincoln. I was wrong about what they would ultimately do and the problems they would ultimately create.”

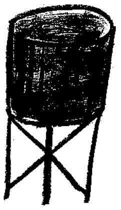
Greenspan’s links to Charles Keating were raised at his confirmation hearings in 1987, but more was made of his history as a Republican adviser. The men who created the Fed, in the years before the First World War, knew that capitalism and democracy were a combustible combination, one that could, all too easily, lead to inflationary spirals, speculative manias, and terrifying busts. The only way to remedy these problems, they believed, was to create an independent custodian of American capitalism, a prestigious individual who could be part umpire, part policeman, and part preacher.



The opportunity for Greenspan to prove his independence arrived quickly. Between March, 1988, and March, 1989, the Fed raised short-term interest rates from six and a half per cent to almost ten per cent, to head off inflation. The resultant recession didn’t start until August, 1990, and lasted less than a year, but as 1992 approached President Bush’s economic advisers grew increasingly concerned that the Fed was not cutting interest rates quickly enough to insure a vigorous recovery. Nicholas Brady, the Treasury Secretary, was an old pal of Greenspan’s from Wall Street, but that didn’t prevent Brady from repeatedly calling for more interest-rate cuts. The friendship between Brady and Greenspan turned increasingly sour. At one point, Brady even cancelled his weekly lunches with the Fed chairman. After Bush’s defeat, some Republicans blamed Greenspan for losing them the election. (Arguably, it was the second time he had cost the G.O.P. the White House.)

With Bill Clinton’s arrival in the Oval Office, in 1993, relations between the Fed and the White House improved sharply. Part of it was personal chemistry: Greenspan was impressed by the new President’s agile mind, which could pick up complicated economic concepts quickly, and by his willingness to adopt conservative financial policies. (Greenspan has told colleagues that he regards Clinton and Nixon as the two smartest Presidents he has dealt with.) Part of it was politics: the Clinton Administration, unlike its predecessor, made little attempt to bully the Fed. This was not accidental, as Robert Rubin, who headed the National Economic Council for the first two years of the Clinton Presidency, explained to me: “What happened in the past was that Presidents tended to get upset when whatever the Fed chairman was doing wasn’t consistent with their purposes. This President had the good sense to recognize from the very beginning that by not trying, even verbally or rhetorically, to interfere with the activities of the Fed, he himself could gain credibility with respect to economic issues. And he was right.” The Fed chairman resumed his weekly lunches with the Treasury Secretary, who was now Lloyd Bentsen. These meetings continued when Bentsen was succeeded, in 1994, by Rubin, and when Rubin was replaced, last year, by Larry Summers.

The entente cordiale between the White House and the Fed has been one of the distinguishing features of the Clinton Administration. Bob Woodward, in his 1994 book, "The Agenda," suggested that Greenspan reached an agreement with the Clinton Administration, in which the Fed chairman promised to keep interest rates steady if the White House delivered a credible budget-reduction package. "Not true," Rubin said to me. What actually happened, Rubin went on, was that the President assumed that a substantial budget package would give the Fed more leeway to keep interest rates low, and this helped persuade him to adopt a strict fiscal policy. "But it was an assumption as opposed to a deal," Rubin insisted.



The Marriner S. Eccles Federal Reserve Board Building, built in 1936, is an austere white marble box extending for an entire city block along Constitution Avenue between Twentieth Street and Twenty-first Street. Visitors pass through security on the C Street side and find themselves in a large open area dominated by Doric columns and a grand marble staircase. At the top of the staircase and through a hallway is the Fed's inner sanctum: a long corridor lined by the governors' offices and a large, ornate boardroom that was used during the Second World War for the Arcadia Conference, at which Roosevelt and Churchill mapped out the Allied campaign against Hitler.

Eight times a year, the boardroom houses a meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee. (The committee has twelve seats: seven are taken up by Fed governors appointed by the President; the five others rotate among the presidents of the twelve regional Reserve Banks. At the moment, two of the governors' seats are vacant.) The meetings begin with charts and a presentation by Michael Prell and Karen Johnson, the Fed's top staff economists. It is one of the Fed's many peculiarities that these officials are paid substantially more than the Fed chairman. (Prell earns about a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars a year, Greenspan just over a hundred and forty-one thousand.) After Prell and Johnson, Greenspan goes around the table and asks each committee member for his or her opinion before stating his own. This process is not just ceremonial. There are seventeen people currently eligible to serve on the F.O.M.C., and thirteen have doctorates in economics. Greenspan is the undisputed leader all the same, and the other members are reluctant to vote against him. "He produces consensus in the same way other good leaders do: by listening extremely closely to what others have to say, by synthesizing that very well, and by sensing the broad middle," Roger Ferguson, the Fed's vice-chairman, told me. "Also, he clearly has a point of view about the economy. He presents it in speeches. He presents it privately as well."

The current debate within the F.O.M.C. is not whether to raise interest rates further but by how much. Greenspan, after playing the Randian hero, liberating the forces of Internet capitalism, has now reverted to the more traditional central banker's role of restraining a rampaging economy. Complicating his thinking is the stock market. In a now famous December, 1996, speech, he posed the question "How do we know when irrational exuberance has unduly escalated asset values?" The query wasn't purely rhetorical. For the next year or so, Greenspan and his staff studied the question, before concluding that it couldn't be answered sensibly. With no signposts to guide him, Greenspan decided that the Fed should stand aside and let the stock market find its own level. Whether or not the decision was soundly based—some observers, including me, have argued it wasn't—it proved unsustainable. Eventually, the rising stock market revved up the economy to such an extent that Greenspan could sit on his hands no longer.

He is now in the awkward position of arguing, simultaneously, that the Fed needs to restrain the economy; that the economy is zooming mainly because of the rising stock market; and that the Fed is not targeting stock prices. In principle, the three statements might be reconciled—although not easily. In practice, if Greenspan is determined to slow down the economy he will almost certainly have to keep raising interest rates until the stock market cracks (not merely shakes). He still believes it is impossible to determine with certainty when a healthy bull market turns into a speculative bubble, but he has also told colleagues that he now suspects that what is happening on Wall Street has elements of a bubble. He is particularly alarmed by the spread of computer day-trading, which he compares to casino gambling. In lighthearted moments, he has been heard to suggest that all day traders should be forced, before they start trading, to take an examination in which they are asked to identify the products of the companies that they intend to buy and sell.

With the Fed raising interest rates, the big question is whether the bubble will deflate gradually. History doesn't teach any simple lessons. In 1929 and 1987, Fed interest-rate hikes were followed, at some distance, by stock-market collapses. In Japan a decade ago, the central bank raised interest rates explicitly to burst a speculative bubble. There was no collapse, but a slow, inexorable decline in stock prices ensued. Greenspan is well aware that another stock-market crash is a real possibility, but that threat probably won't deter him from raising interest rates further if he believes it is necessary. To him, the Fed's primary duty is to keep the economy on a sustainable course of growth. He also believes that a Wall Street crash would not necessarily be such a bad thing for the economy, as long as the Fed acted wisely in its wake. "Remember the big one-day decline we had back in October 1987?" he asked Lawrence Lindsey. "Its impact on the economy was not all that great. Then, there was the severe decline in stock prices in Japan early in this decade. True, it took growth out of the system, but most of what they have experienced since is the result of an increasingly corrosive nonperforming loan problem. There's no guarantee that even if you get a 1929, you'll end up with a 1932."

Greenspan and Mitchell live in a renovated three-bedroom farmhouse, which Mitchell bought when she moved to the capital in 1976. Every day, Greenspan gets up around five-thirty and spends an hour or two sitting in the bath, reading and writing. These early-morning soaks have acquired near-mythical status, but they are real enough. Greenspan started taking them in the early seventies, after he injured his back. He discovered that the water helped his brain as well as his disks—he often says his I.Q. is fifteen points higher at five-thirty in the morning than it is at five-thirty in the afternoon—and many of his important speeches are conceived or reworked in the tub. "Things do get wet," Mitchell said to me. "I'm amazed that his staff is able to read his chicken scratches, one word bleeding into the next."

When Mitchell isn't out of town on assignment, she and Greenspan like to spend their evenings at home, often eating food prepared for them by their longtime housekeeper. Mitchell is something of a gourmet, but Greenspan likes plain food, such as grilled fish and vegetables. Occasionally, he drinks a glass of wine, but not often. The night before I spoke to Mitchell, they had eaten at home and Greenspan had watched the Baltimore Orioles in their first televised spring-training game. The couple had their first date in 1984, but Greenspan didn't get around to proposing until Christmas Day of 1996. Mitchell says the long courtship didn't bother her. "I knew he was committed to me, and that we planned to spend the rest of our lives together," she told me. Mitchell is fifty-three, twenty-one years younger than her husband, but she said that the age difference has never been a factor. "He's very boyish, he's athletic, and Alan's curiosity is such an important part of his makeup," she said. "He's wide open to possibilities."

Greenspan and Mitchell are regulars on the Washington social circuit, where their friends include Jim Lehrer, of "NewsHour," and his wife, Kate, a novelist; the CNN anchor Judy Woodruff, and her husband, Al Hunt, of the *Wall Street Journal;* Katharine Graham, of the Washington *Post;* the former C.I.A. chief William Webster, and his wife, Lynda; and James Wolfensohn, the head of the World Bank, and his wife, Elaine. Webster is Greenspan's regular tennis partner at Chevy Chase Country Club. Last year, they made the semifinals in the seniors section but lost in a tiebreaker. The Wolfensohns own a house in Wyoming, which Greenspan and Mitchell visit every August when the Fed chairman has to go West for the Kansas City Reserve Bank's annual policy conference, in Jackson Hole. For Greenspan and Mitchell, as for many of their friends, work and play are usually intertwined. Their honeymoon was a weekend in Venice tacked on to a bankers' meeting in Basel, Switzerland, which Greenspan had to attend. When I asked Mitchell if she thought her husband had ever considered retirement, she laughed and said, "This is not a man who will ever retire. He is too alive and too interested. For an economist, he's got the best job imaginable."

A few weeks ago, I got an idea of what Mitchell meant when I went to a conference at Boston College, where Greenspan was a keynote speaker. As far as I could tell, practically every Massachusetts resident over forty with an annual salary of more than two hundred thousand dollars was in the audience. Edward Markey, a Massachusetts congressman, introduced Greenspan as the "Babe Ruth of our economic policy." It happened to be the Fed chairman's seventy-fourth birthday, and before he started to speak a chocolate cake with six lighted candles was carried onto the stage. As Greenspan bowed his head to blow out the candles, Markey led the audience in a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday, Mr. Chairman." When the singing was over, Greenspan ambled to a microphone and said, in his best Woody Allen manner, "If I'd known all of this was about to happen, I would have been on my way to San Francisco." After the laughter subsided, he reiterated his suspicion that "we are now living through a pivotal period in American economic history," in which the growing use of information technology was bringing about "dramatic changes in the way goods and services are produced and in the way they are distributed to final users."

The crowd gave Greenspan a standing ovation. But pivots can swing both ways. In 1929, the revered Fed chairman Roy A. Young saw his good name destroyed overnight by the Great Crash; in the early nineteen-seventies, Greenspan's old mentor Arthur Burns was similarly tarnished by the onset of stagflation. If Greenspan succeeds in slowing down the economy without provoking a recession, he will, surely, go down as one of the great Fed chairmen. If the speculative boom turns to bust, Greenspan will be held responsible for allowing it to get going in the first place. His current reputation will seem as overvalued as an Internet stock, and he will have to fend off angry investors—many of whom bought into his vision of a New Economy—just as he fought off those Irish toughs long ago on the streets of Washington Heights. Whatever happens, Greenspan will be remembered as the public face of American capitalism as it entered the Information Age, with all the world before it, and all challengers seemingly vanquished. For a true Randian, there could be no better fate. ♦

WILL REP
FOR FOOD
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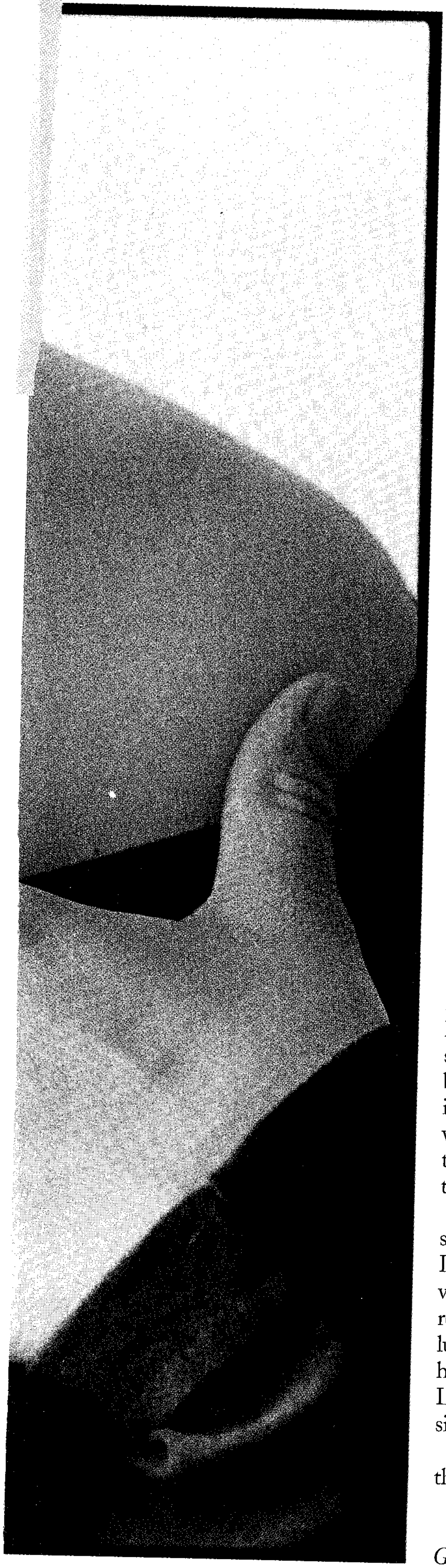
Love



A REPORTER AT LARGE

LANDING FROM THE SKY

Ten years in the life of a young woman from the Bronx.

BY ADRIAN NICOLE LeBLANC

In 1987, when Jessica was nineteen and already had three children, she returned home to her mother's fifth-floor tenement apartment, on Tremont Avenue. She had been staying with her boyfriend, and when they broke up she had nowhere else to go. Living with her mother, Lourdes, wasn't easy. (Some names have been changed.) Lourdes, who was thirty-six, hadn't had a job in years. Money was tight, visitors were frequent, emotions ran high. Jessica no longer had a room of her own; she now slept on a velveteen couch in the *sala*, or living room.

Like her mother, Jessica slept late—through the sounds of working people picking their way around the previous night's detritus, the sibilant noise of old wooden brooms slapping against cement, the tinkle of smashed glass as it dropped into the gutter, the whoosh of water buckets clearing away vomit and cigarette butts and pork-rind bags. Jessica's three-year-old daughter, Serena, shared a room with Lourdes. Jessica's twin girls had a crib next to the couch. Even though Jessica was living with her kids, she wasn't really looking after them: she might bathe them, or style their hair, but Lourdes had more or less been raising Serena, and Jessica's friend Rosa, who loved children, often took care of the twins. Jessica's first loyalty was to the street.

Jessica and her mother argued constantly about Jessica's irresponsibility, but Lourdes's pronouncements carried little weight: she, too, loved to party and, in recent years, had sometimes been a reluctant mother to her own kids. Jessica had always wanted to be taken care of; Lourdes, who had had to raise her own siblings, wanted to be taken care of, too.

Tremont marks the north end of the South Bronx; Lourdes's apartment was just off the Grand Concourse. The neighborhood drug trade was booming, and although cellular phones hadn't hit the street level of the business yet, there were plenty of beepers—on boys riding skateboards, on boys buying Pampers for their babies or heading for the stores on Fordham Road and Burnside to steal. But the boys who caught Jessica's eye were the ones walking out of the bodega with cash and attitude. They pushed open the smudged doors plastered with Budweiser posters as if they were stepping into a party instead of onto a littered sidewalk beside a potholed street. It was similar to the way Jessica stepped onto the pavement whenever she left the three girls with her mother and descended the four flights of stairs, to emerge, expectant, from the paint-chipped vestibule. Outside, anything could happen.

The block was hectic, but her appearance usually caused a stir. Jessica created an aura of intimacy wherever she went. You could be talking to her in the middle of Tremont and feel as if a confidence were being exchanged beneath a tent of sheets. Guys in cars offered rides. Grown men got stupid. Women got worried or jealous. Boys made promises they didn't keep.

Although Jessica wanted to be somebody's girlfriend, she was usually the other girl, the mistress; boys called up to her window after they'd dropped off their main girls. Her oldest daughter, Serena, whom she had had when she was sixteen, belonged to a boy named Kuri. Jessica had met Kuri at a toga party on Crotona Avenue, when she should have been in school. He was a break dancer, a member of the Rock Steady Crew. One thing led to another, and they ended up in a bedroom on a pile of coats.

Kuri, who had a steady girlfriend, refused to admit that Serena was his child.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KRISTINE LARSEN

George gave her a diamond Rolex with her birthstone on it. He wanted her customized.

"My entire vision for the future passed before my eyes."

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When Lourdes asked Jessica who the father was, she lied and told her it was a neighborhood boy she'd dated. Then one day she came home with a video of the movie "Beat Street," in which Kuri had a small part. Lourdes had heard enough about Kuri to be on the alert as they settled down with their dog, Sparky, to watch the film. In it, a boy who looked a lot like Serena did a break dance and challenged a rival crew to a battle at the Roxy.

"Hold that pause," Lourdes shouted. "That's Serena's father! I will cut my pussy off and give it to that dog if that ain't Serena's father!"

After Serena's birth, Jessica dropped out of school. She became increasingly depressed, and even attempted suicide by swallowing pills. When she was in the hospital getting her stomach pumped, she learned that she was pregnant with twins, by Kuri's brother. He acknowledged the children, but he cheated on her, and now she was home again.

At Lourdes's, the life of the apartment moved in lockstep with the life of the street. The beginning of the month, when the welfare check came in, was a good time—a time to buy things, a time to go out dancing. Lourdes packed the shelves with food. She sent Jessica to the dollar store to get King Pine and cocoa butter and shampoo. Outside, the drug dealers enjoyed the surge in business. By late afternoon, Lourdes was up—blasting Spanish music, clanking around the kitchen, cooking rice and *gandules* and pork chops. Evelyn, her younger daughter, was coming home from working at C-Town; Phil, her older son, was back from his classes at Hunter College, holed up in his room. Jessica's baby brother, Joey, rolled in and out with his posse. Boyfriends and neighbors were dropping by. Lourdes was an excellent cook: she fed them all.

Everything changed at the end of the month, when the money ran out. Lourdes would take to her bed. Meals were sometimes reduced to white rice and ketchup. Jessica gave the girls sugar water before bed to fill them up. Joey stole fruit from a nearby Korean market and bread from a grocery store across the street. Jessica might try to cajole the girls' fathers to provide Pampers, but they didn't always come through.

Phil and Evelyn were trying to stay out of trouble, but Joey and Jessica were playing the odds. Joey was drifting into crime; Jessica still counted on being rescued. "Jessica was a dreamer," Lourdes recalled recently. "She always wanted to have a king with a maid. I always told her, 'That's only in books. Face reality.' Her dream was more upper than herself." Lourdes would caution her beautiful daughter as she disappeared down the dreary stairwell: "God ain't gonna have a pillow waiting for your ass when you fall landing from the sky."

Jessica did take a fall. The decade that followed brought high times and hard times, and the hard times usually came from Jessica's thralldom to her chosen saviors. Her life would change utterly, and then change again. In some ways, though, Jessica was lucky. Not everyone survives being rescued.

BLIND DATE

On January 23, 1988, Jessica met George—Boy George, he was called—on a blind date arranged by Evelyn's boyfriend. It would be a double date, and she agreed to it on one condition: "If he's ugly, bring me home at ten."

The night of the date, Lourdes and her daughters waited by the window, looking down onto Tremont. "George pulled up in a car that was like the ocean," Lourdes says. It was a graphite Mercedes-Benz, and he saluted Lourdes through the sunroof. As soon as Jessica saw him, she adjusted her curfew. He was so handsome in his leather trenchcoat—with dark hair, a goatee, smooth skin, dark-brown eyes—that she was willing to surrender the next day or two. Suddenly, Lourdes "remembered" that she couldn't babysit.

Boy George understood the cue: he recalls giving Lourdes some high-quality cocaine and a thousand dollars in cash. Lourdes was not the first difficult mother he'd encountered, nor was it the first time he'd heard a response like hers: *Baby, you can keep my daughter out all night.* Jessica admired his savvy, although the implications of the transaction embarrassed her.

"She'd just sold her to me for a thousand dollars," Boy George says. "I could have been a serial killer and sliced her up." Actually, a thousand dollars was nothing to Boy George. At the time he and Jessica met, he was running the largest heroin operation in the borough, bringing in a quarter of a million dollars a week.

The young couples went to the movies and dinner, and then Boy George suggested they go to a club. Jessica had dressed conservatively, and she asked to stop by Lourdes's apartment so she could change. Contact lenses replaced her eyeglasses. Her hair, which had been stretched into a tight bun, now fell around her neck in a soft, loose mane. The long skirt, blazer, and plain pumps were exchanged for spandex tights and knee-high boots. Then, there was the makeup. Jessica called this "dressing *puta*." When she returned to the car, Boy George asked, "You sure you the same girl?"

He and Jessica ended the night in a five-hundred-dollar suite at the Loews Glenpoint Hotel, in Teaneck, New Jersey. Boy George asked her about her dreams and fears and actually listened to her answers. She told him what she had never told Lourdes: that one of her mother's boyfriends had sexually abused her for years. Boy George held her all night. Jessica was overwhelmed: despite all he'd paid for, he didn't expect her to have sex with him. He ordered room service and fed Jessica strawberries in the king-size bed. "I felt like a princess," she says. "I felt loved." As it turned out, not having sex with a girl on a first date was one of Boy George's most successful strategies.

The following morning, Jessica encountered her first brunch—sliced fruit fanned out on silver trays, cold cuts rolled into cylinders, bread baked in animal shapes. All this was arranged on a large cloth-covered table beneath an ice sculpture of two swans in a melting embrace.

THE FIFTY-DOLLAR RULE

Not long after their first date, Jessica paged Boy George from a pay phone on the Grand Concourse. Snow was falling. Jessica didn't have a winter coat. Her penny loafers were soaked.

Boy George was at Grand Billiards, playing pool. He didn't want to interrupt his game, so he dispatched one of his workers. "I'm calling for Boy George," the worker said.

"Oh, hello." Jessica remembers that she used her softest voice, just loud enough to be heard above the traffic. "I was wondering if you could do me a favor." Jessica opened many conversations exactly like this. She was beginning a request for money, which would be followed by an explanation that would continue as long as necessary, like falling dominoes. She needed a ride. She didn't have money for a cab. She needed a ride to a friend's house to collect twenty dollars. The girl owed her the money. She needed the money to buy milk for her hungry daughters.

"Hold on a minute," the worker said. Boy George took the receiver.

His voice was calm but sharp. "Listen, if you are calling me just for money, don't call. Don't you call me for money."

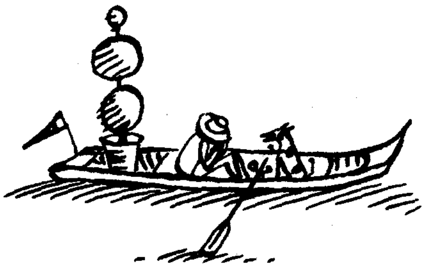
"Mmnnn," Jessica said.

"Where you at?" Boy George asked.

"A Hundred and Seventy-sixth and the Concourse."

"Stay there. Someone will be by to pick you up."

The worker drove her to Grand Billiards. They waited in the car. Boy George joined them with three friends. Jessica asked him for money a second time.



"I only like to say things once. If you calling me for money, don't call."

"Fuck you," Jessica snapped.

In retrospect, Boy George thinks he should have "served her" with a proper beating. Instead, he ordered the driver to go to Lourdes's building, dragged Jessica out of the car, and frog-marched her up the stairs. At some point, he noticed that she was wearing a pair of jeans he had seen on Lourdes.

"Whose jeans is those?" he asked.

"They mine."

"Why your mother have them on then?"

"It's not like what's mine is mine. We the same size. We—"

"Shit," he said. He inspected the cabinets and the refrigerator. "There was nothing," he recalls. "There was nothing in that subway station."

Within a few hours, his employees returned to the apartment laden with grocery bags. Joey rushed to his window and looked down over Tremont. Two Jeeps were parked outside, still stuffed with groceries.

"There was so much food that the bags didn't fit in the kitchen," Joey says. "There was food in my room under the bed." Meat—chicken, pork chops, steak—filled the refrigerator and the freezer. Lourdes sobbed as each grocery bag was carried beneath the lucky horseshoe stuck above her door.

"He got everything," Jessica says. "Everything." She was sure, because she and Lourdes tried to figure out items he had forgotten or overlooked. He had even bought a flea collar and dog food for Sparky.

The next day, Boy George brought Jessica bags of clothes. From now on, Jessica had to *represent*. He and Jessica sat on the couch in the crowded living room. He asked Jessica where she slept.

"You sitting on my bed right now."

It wasn't a fold-out bed. It was a couch. Boy George recalls saying to himself, "What the fuck is going on here?"

Boy George gave Jessica a job packing heroin at one of his mills, near Aqueduct Avenue, though she worked there only briefly, because the smell of the heroin made her ill. He also gave her money for her daughters, but he didn't much want them around. Once, Jessica left Lourdes's apartment to run an errand and didn't come home for a week. "I just dropped my kids for him," Jessica says. "At night, he would say, 'Don't leave and go back to them.' I just did what my mother did to me." Soon, Jessica moved out completely.

Boy George had a number of apartments—one on Henwood, one on Morris, two in a Manhattan building called Normandie Court—and he would move Jessica from one to another. "He'd bring home a whole lot of videos, and I would just watch TV. I didn't have to get a job. I was to cook and clean and take care of the things, and I would get my allowance at the end of the week."

In the early days, Jessica's allowance was generous—a thousand dollars a week or more. George also surprised her with vacations and jewelry. He didn't want her gold to be thin and bendable. It had to be thick. If Jessica liked a necklace—a heart of sapphires, say—he would tell his jeweller, "We'll take that, but make it different." He got her a diamond Rolex and added her birthstone to it. He gave her a belt buckle with her name spelled out in emeralds. To George, looking good meant looking unique. He wanted Jessica customized, like his cars.

"He matched me up," Jessica says. No stained clothes, nothing borrowed, no jeans with a yellow sheen from the cheap soap at the laundromat. He took Jessica shopping in Greenwich Village and introduced her to the fifty-dollar rule. Nothing under fifty dollars was to be taken off the rack. No ten-dollar stores, no V.I.M., no Payless.

Jessica enjoyed going shopping. She added to a growing collection of leather coats—full-length and waist-length, in rainbow colors. She gave some of Boy George's sweatsuits to Joey, supplied Pampers for the children, and bought sneakers for everyone. She gave Lourdes cash and paid her rent and her electric bills.

At first, Boy George discouraged Jessica from spending time at Lourdes's, and soon he forbade it. He considered Jessica's mother a bad influence. Occasionally, he allowed the twins, who were living with Rosa by then, to be brought over to whatever apartment he and Jessica were living in. Serena remained with Lourdes. Weeks might pass without a visit from Jessica. Lourdes says, "I didn't even know where my daughter lived."

SNOW IN THE POCONOS

Soon after Jessica met George, her brother Joey got together with a girl named Marisol. Marisol was a sportier, sweeter version of the girl Jessica had been. Joey and Marisol met outside a bodega when Joey was hanging out at the western end of Tremont, robbing people. That day, she had her hair pulled up severely, with two lollipops stuck in the topknot of her bun. At four feet nine, Marisol was chunky and proud of it. She preferred tight pants, and shirts that exposed her midriff. The spandex pants that were in style were called bubble gums. Marisol had a pair in every color—blue, red, green, yellow, black, pink, and turquoise. "I used to rock those, they used to cling to my butt, I used to love it," Marisol says. That day, she was wearing the turquoise pair. She swished into the store and out again. Joey stood before her in a red leather hooded jacket, the hood trimmed with what looked like rabbit fur. He was holding a pack of Mike & Ike candy in his hand. He grinned. "We began to conversate," Marisol recalls. Soon Joey brought her home to meet his family.

Jessica was the most beautiful girl Marisol had ever seen: light-skinned, with "dead" hair—straight and shiny, like a white girl's. She had sleepy eyes, a big butt, large breasts, manicured nails, and a wide smile crowded with white, even teeth. She smelled like a rich girl—not of the sharp scents you got at the dollar store but of a name-brand perfume. And she was friendly, which surprised Marisol, because a girl with all that could have been a snob.

In early 1989, Boy George told Jessica that they were going to the Poconos, and he invited Joey and Marisol to come along. They all drove off in a white stretch limousine. Marisol remembers wishing the chauffeur would loop around her block so she could show the car off to her friends. After the limousine crossed the George Washington Bridge, Boy George opened the cooler and pulled out a bottle of Moët. He was in an expansive mood and wanted everyone to drink. He himself would not drink, because he was training as an amateur boxer. Marisol didn't want to drink, either, because alcohol made her queasy, and Jessica wasn't feeling in a partying mood just yet. "Whoever doesn't drink has to walk—I'm leaving you on the side of the road," Boy George told them. Marisol remembers that she began to smile, thinking it was a joke. "He means it," Jessica whispered. "Listen to him, 'cause he'll leave you, and he will—he did it to me." Marisol and Joey drank. Jessica had to drink until the champagne ran out. Then she got sick, and Boy George told the chauffeur to pull into the breakdown lane. With her head jutting out the window, Jessica vomited, clasping her hair and her gold chains at the nape of her neck.

A few hours later, the Mount Airy Lodge appeared, like a palace tucked in the snow. Boy George paid for their rooms in cash, and handed Joey a set of keys. The rooms George rented were called Crystal Palace Suites, and each one was big enough for an entire family. Everything was color-coördinated in gold and powder-blue. There was a TV, a stereo, a fireplace with a log that never stopped burning. There was a red heart-shaped Jacuzzi in the huge bathroom. The bed was round, and there were mirrors on the walls and on the ceiling. The living room opened onto a heated swimming pool. The room was so interesting, Marisol thought, you would never need the street. When Boy George and Joey headed off to ski, Jessica was grateful for Marisol's company. George could sometimes stay away for days, and she hated being left alone.

Around midnight, she and Marisol were still sitting beside the swimming pool. Suddenly, the lights went out, leaving the girls in darkness, except for the underwater spotlights of the pool. A croaky voice broke the silence. It was George pretending to be Jason, from the movie "Friday the 13th." "We were so scared," Jessica says. "That was when there were things that could scare me." Boy George tossed Jessica in the water, fully clothed.

Back in their own Crystal Palace Suite, Marisol and Joey pretended they were on their honeymoon. They made love on the round bed and ordered food and watched TV and made love again in the heart-shaped Jacuzzi. From their bed, they watched the sunrise. "We broke night," Marisol says. Over the next six years, Marisol and Joey had two children, but this was their only honeymoon. They were both fourteen.

DO NOT PASS GO

Boy George didn't keep his other girlfriends a secret, and he expected Jessica to take his telephone messages. "I'd get hit if I got mad when the other girls called," she said. Sometimes, Jessica took the liberty of calling the girls back. "Don't beep my man," she'd say, or, "Don't you be calling my husband." When Boy George came home, he would berate her. "What are you doing beeping my girls back? You're not allowed to beep my girls back."

Jessica could tell when he was going on a date, because he wore slacks instead of jeans. "Why don't you just wear your jeans if you going out with the boys?" she would ask.

"Why don't you fucking shut the fuck up?" he'd reply.

More and more, Jessica saw George late at night if she saw him at all. Sometimes, he locked her in the apartment. He no longer gave her a regular allowance, and he was gone for weeks at a time. During the spring of 1989, she borrowed money from her girlfriends; she didn't dare touch the stacks of cash he left lying around the apartment. Materially, in fact, her life was no longer very different from her life with Lourdes, except that the apartment was "hooked up," and she had a telephone. (She didn't know it at the time, but federal investigators had installed a wiretap.)

By then, Boy George was beating Jessica more frequently. She knew she'd received a particularly bad one if she came to at his mother's. (Once, he left her there after hitting her with a two-by-four.) Some beatings, such as the one that cracked her skull, were handled by a private physician.

On the morning of May 1, 1989, Boy George got a call from a lieutenant of his, who told him to "do a Jimmy James Brown"—make a run for it. When Boy George stepped outside, he was arrested by agents from the Drug Enforcement Agency and local police officers, who had been following his organization for almost two years. Twenty-two of his em-

DAY JOB

Adhesive-company sales representative.

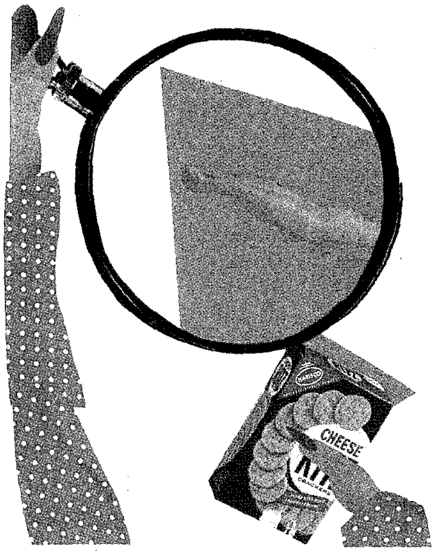
National Starch & Chemical is a two-and-a-half-billion-dollar company that sells glue—or adhesive, as it's called in our industry—for a lot of different products. It's the widest line out there. Our glue is real clean. It doesn't clog the nozzle. Plant managers love us.

Adhesives is a very male-dominated industry. Most of the sales force are men, and almost all the clients are men. And so, when you're a woman in this industry, the customers just want to see what you look like. Usually, people turn sales reps away, but I've never had a problem getting in anywhere. What's hard is convincing them that you know what you're talking about. Like there's this account I won recently, it's actually a Coca-Cola plant. They use adhesives to seal their cases. And when I contacted them they were using a competitor's product that was causing them some problems.

After a couple of calls, I got out onto the production floor and took a look at what they were doing. And I managed to convince the manager to let me have a demonstration trial of my adhesive. We had to do it when they were shut down for cleaning. So I was literally getting up at two o'clock in the morning, taking a shower and putting on a skirt and suit jacket—you know, a matching suit outfit—and going into this dark, hot plant in the middle of the night and sticking my adhesive in their machines. But I proved our product was superior. And that plant—we switched them over. All their lines.

I've been very successful at convincing people to go with us. But what's more important, I think, is that I know what to do to service the client and make him happy once he's on board. That's another one of the harder parts of the job. Envelopes, in particular—I mean, just so you know, envelope manufacturers are horrible. They're like the typical good-old-boys network. Every supplier takes them out for dinner. I'll bet they eat four- and five-course meals four out of five nights of the week.

I try to do other things to stay involved with my client. I had an account that I was trying to get, and the guy mentioned that he plays something called underwater hockey on Friday nights. So I went one Friday night and I played underwater hockey, where you have to wear a snorkel and a mask and fins. And you have this stick—this hockey stick that's like eight inches long—and you move a puck around the bottom of a pool. Now I play on Friday nights at least once a month. We started getting his account immediately.



STEPHEN KRONINGER

If I could live my life over, I'd do this again. And it's weird now, because I've recently been offered a promotion out of sales into marketing. It's considered a big step up. I'll get a big raise. But still I'm gonna miss sales. Because it's fun. I love it, I love the people, the hands-on stuff, you know? And because, well, just because I kicked ass.

—*Interviewed by Kristy Hasen*

ployees had already been brought in.

It was fourteen months before Boy George's case went to trial, and for most of that time he was housed at the Metropolitan Correctional Center, in lower Manhattan, better known as the M.C.C. At first, Jessica went to see him almost every day. Eventually, she managed to bypass the usual procedure—which involved guards and forms and stamps and metal detectors—by using a paralegal's pass that one of Boy George's private investigators procured for her. Ostensibly, Jessica was conducting research for Boy George's case. In fact, she ran errands for him all over the city, buying him sneakers and sweatsuits, checking on his mother, bringing him homemade food, yachting magazines, and pornography. They shadowboxed for hours in the attorneys' room. Finally, he had time for her.

Jessica relished the attention she was now getting. One day, Boy George even gave Jessica his favorite charm for safekeeping—two tiny gold boxing gloves, which symbolized the Golden Gloves competition he still hoped to win. She wore the gloves on a slender gold chain around her neck. "Because I'm his champ," she said proudly. At the same time, Jessica never underestimated his reach. Boy George had a hit man. He was fond of saying, "If I can trust you, I can kill you."

To prove her devotion, Jessica agreed to get a tattoo. "If you love me, you'll do it," Boy George told her. He decided on the words "Jessica loves George," over her heart; she had it done in a tattoo parlor on Avenue C. For the next one, though, George wanted something fancier. He read through the trade magazines until he discovered a tattoo artist in Elizabeth, New Jersey, who had been rated one of the nation's best; George's driver took Jessica there.

The second tattoo, high on her right thigh, was elegant: a heart with a rose and "George" written beneath it, in script. The day after she got it, Jessica wore a skirt with a slit, so she could show him. When he saw the tattoo, he pronounced with appreciative incredulity, "You stupid bitch!"

Altogether, she got six tattoos in his honor, including a poem, written on a scroll, just above her left shoulder blade:

George
No matter where I am
or what I'm doing
You're always there
always on my mind
and in my heart . . .

As Boy George prepared for his trial, Jessica settled into her new freedom. She moved back in with Lourdes and Serena, but there were some weeks when she went out dancing every night. Serena often tried to block the door to keep her mother home. "I used to always break her stockings, so that she would have to come back in," Serena recalls. "But she never came back in—she would fight me to get to that door."

"The twins had each other; Serena had nobody," Jessica's older brother, Phil, recalls. "Serena suffered a whole lot more than Jessica did." Evelyn had taught her niece to open and heat a can of Spaghettios when she was hungry, and never to open the apartment door when she was alone. Serena watched cartoons all morning and afternoon while everyone slept. She would try to shush her baby sisters when they made noise. She was five. People often said of her, "That child is too grown!"

Joey was serving time in a juvenile facility for attempted murder, but Marisol still came by the house regularly. She and Serena kept each other company. She styled Serena's hair. They poured baby powder on the floor in the dining room and pretended to be ice skating.

To celebrate the birthday of a friend of Jessica's, Boy George told her to take a thousand dollars from his stash. He booked a limousine to deliver her and her girlfriends to Victor's Café, on Fifty-second Street, in Manhattan, where they ate a seemingly endless meal. He even called the restaurant on the pay phone to send his love. The *plátano* had candles. Handsome waiters sang.

In August of 1990, Boy George and five co-defendants went on trial. In November, George was convicted of conspiring to run a continuing criminal enterprise and of tax evasion, and the following April was given a life sentence with no option for parole. The judge told him that he was the most violent person ever to have set foot in her courtroom.

After the sentencing, Boy George phoned Jessica: "He told me, 'They have your name down on papers already, they gonna arrest you,' and he wrote to my mother to say that I was going to suffer like a dog."

50% OFF
ALL WORTHLESS
MERCHANDISE
DIFFEE

Two weeks later, Jessica heard the cop-call. The cop-call was a neighborly warning sounded by anyone who spotted the police, for anyone who might like to know. Jessica walked to the kitchen window to see what was happening. The street had been blocked off. Cruisers were parked and others were pulling up. Then someone pounded on the door, and she heard, "Police! Open up! *Policía!*"

Jessica called Marisol, who ran all the way from her mother's. Jessica was handcuffed and brought down to the M.C.C. The timing of the arrest warrant, she later learned, arose from the need to protect her: the D.E.A. had intercepted information that Boy George, presumably fearing she would turn state's evidence, had put out a contract on her life. But investigators also had information about her brief employment packing heroin. In December, she pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute heroin and was sentenced to ten years in a federal penitentiary.

"So what if he's not the man of your dreams. The 'Times' is going to be there."

SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY

By 1994, Jessica's friend Rosa had added Serena to her growing brood of other people's children; at Lourdes's, the child had missed most of first grade. Jessica had been concerned: "The hanging out, the people coming in and out, my daughter didn't have no privacy." From prison, she had warned her mother, "The friends you're hanging out with are going to lead you to me. Believe me, there is a bunk waiting for you."

Rosa was stocky and strong; she always had a toddler in the crook of her arm. Young mothers would go to their jobs, or out dancing, or they'd need time to work out problems with their men, and they'd leave their kids with her. A strict and practical woman, she could always be trusted. But Jessica's children were a priority. "They were happy, they weren't going from house to house," Rosa recalls. "They used to go to school every single day." She worried most about Serena, who, in turn, constantly fretted over her younger sisters. "I told her, 'Serena, I'm the one who is supposed to take care of you. You do what I tell you to do, and I'll take care of the girls.' "

But it was hard to take care of the girls in the Bronx, and it would only get harder as they got older. Serena didn't sleep well, because of all the street noise and the gunfire, and she would cry out for Lourdes in the middle of the night. Junkies shot up in the stairwells and had sex on the roof. The only play area for the children was a concrete space between two buildings. Rosa's older brother had recently joined a growing number of Bronx friends and neighbors who had moved upstate, and the news that drifted back to Rosa was all good. Apartments were spacious. Children could play outdoors safely. There were factory jobs. The schools were strict about classwork and attendance. Rosa's family would help her take care of the children, so that she could go back to work.

In the spring of that year, when Serena was eight, Rosa moved upstate with Jessica's girls to a housing project in Troy. The same month, Jessica was transferred, at her own request, to a medium-security women's facility in Danbury, Connecticut, and she would spend most of her sentence there. She wanted to be closer to her children.

The prison was situated on a hilltop that was also home to a flock of geese. It looked like a high school with barbed wire around it. Inside, spotless floors shone against beige cinder-block walls. The women in Jessica's unit lived in gray cubicles, or "cubes." Each cube had bunk beds and two squat lockers, one on top of the other. The bathrooms were down the hall.

That summer, Jessica took a particular interest in a correction officer named Ernesto Díaz. Díaz supervised the compound's power plant, where Jessica had been trained as a lagger—someone who wraps pipes with insulation. She worked the night shift. Most of the time, there wasn't much work to do, especially since Díaz didn't believe in what he called "bright work," or busy work—mopping floors that were already clean, polishing already shining brass railings, painting over paint.

When he could, Díaz says, he left the women alone. "Don't make my shift rough, and I'll treat you like a human being" was his philosophy. The inmates often sat and talked, or wrote letters, or listened to the radio, or napped. Díaz occasionally shared treasures of free-world food, like Kentucky Fried Chicken, cranberry juice, or doughnuts. Mr. Doughnut became his nickname.

Díaz was accustomed to the flirting; it was a chronic condition of an officer's life at a women's prison. At the plant, he says, women would dance around his desk, sometimes touching themselves and making suggestive remarks. Jessica danced everywhere—in the supply room, in the office. "There were other ones that did it," Díaz recalls, "but she was very good at it." Soon they found themselves having long conversations. He told her about his wife and children.

Jessica told him about her daughters, especially Serena, and about her own unhappy childhood and her turbulent relationship with Lourdes. He gave her an article about child abuse. Several inmates noticed the increasing amount of time Jessica and Díaz spent alone.

At first, Jessica considered Díaz merely a challenge, but as time went on she found herself moved by his concern for her. She appealed to Queenie, an inmate who practiced Santeria, and one night they performed a ritual to help matters along. Queenie instructed Jessica to obtain an apple. They removed the core, wrote Díaz's name on a piece of paper, rolled it up and stuck it inside the apple, and then topped it off with honey. It was tucked away in Díaz's locker.

Jessica and Díaz grew closer. He prepared linguine with clam sauce for her, let her listen to his house-music tapes, brought her a bottle of her favorite perfume. She showed him gifts she had been preparing for her daughters for Family Day, in August.

Family Day was one of the facility's biggest events: there were hamburgers and hot dogs and Sno-cones for the children; there were performances and games. Jessica hadn't seen Serena in more than a year; she hadn't seen the twins since her arrest. "It was all she talked about for several weeks," Díaz says. Jessica had sent Lourdes all the requisite forms well beforehand. She had even included a free voucher for the forty-five-minute bus ride, and the bus left directly from the Bronx. But when Family Day finally arrived no one showed up.

Jessica was devastated. Díaz brought her a rose and a sympathy card. He offered to mail the gifts to the children, and even included a "Jurassic Park" videotape for the twins and a bottle of perfume for Serena. "That was when she really started to get interested in me," he says. Díaz also volunteered to visit Jessica's children in Troy, which meant a great deal to her. He and Jessica fantasized about a future together. Before long, they arranged to have sex in the back of a storage room, but the circumstances made physical intimacy difficult; mostly, they talked through the night. Díaz was struck by Jessica's longing for contact with her mother.

In the fall, Jessica discovered she was once again pregnant with twins. She told the prison authorities that she'd been raped, by a guard she couldn't identify, but the internal investigation led to Díaz—plenty of snitches volunteered their suspicions about Jessica and Mr. Doughnut. In the meantime, Jessica was transferred to "the camp," a minimum-security facility up the road.

Minimum-security status meant fewer restrictions than before, but Jessica had little interest in her new freedoms. One of her roommates remembers that she rarely left her bed. Her pregnancy had gained her a certain amount of institutional notoriety, however, and her friends tried to cheer her up. They made a special jailhouse dish, which involved mashing together everything sweet you could lay your hands on and spreading it over a layer of crushed cookies. They made hooch by mixing fruit with bread from the cafeteria and stowing it above a ceiling panel until it fermented. They painted Jessica's toenails.

The authorities wanted to run a DNA test on the fetuses, but Jessica refused, in order to protect Díaz. She was still corresponding with him through the mother of a prison friend. She read and reread his letters before she had to toss them down the toilet. She prayed for an early release and daydreamed about what she'd do when she got out. She wrote Serena that she wouldn't be returning to the Bronx: instead, they'd all go somewhere happy, somewhere far away. Rosa chastised Jessica for filling the head of a nine-year-old with such notions. She knew where Jessica's dreams had led, and she was determined to keep Serena's head out of the clouds.

THE CHILDREN'S ROOM

Several months later, in the spring of 1995, Evelyn and Marisol brought Serena and the twins for a visit. The visiting room was light and airy. At one end was a play area, which greeted guests with a detailed list of rules. A large sign said, "Welcome Back!" Since some children believed that they were visiting their mothers at work or in the hospital, visitors were not supposed to use the words "prison" and "jail" to describe the place.

Jessica appeared carrying a clear plastic bag full of crocheting. She wore a teal cotton sweatsuit over an ironed white T-shirt. She had colored her hair red with jailhouse dye, but it had grown out, revealing brown-black roots. She wore almost no makeup, and her face looked full and vulnerable. Serena and the twins ran to her and hugged her. Then the twins drifted toward the play area. Serena hovered near Jessica, who tried to defuse the awkwardness by showing her what she'd made: sweaters for the unborn twins and a peach-and-yellow coverlet for Serena.

Jessica then showed her daughter a copy of her most recent sonogram. "See, Baby A, that's his head, his eyes, the ears." Jessica outlined the bodies with her fingernail. "There's Baby B. His eyes there, his ears? You can't really see him on that one, but there's his head. They real big, right? That's what the doctor said, they got big heads."

With fluid movements, Jessica untied Serena's ponytail and combed out the knots with her fingers, then made a perfect topknot on the crown of her daughter's head. Rosa had little time to fuss over the girls' appearance, but Jessica had always enjoyed making her daughters pretty. Serena loved to be touched. She bit her lip and leaned into Jessica's side. Jessica rested a hand on her large belly. Serena lifted it and placed her own hand beneath.

"Mommy," Serena whispered, and reminded Jessica of what they had done when Boy George's mother brought her to visit two years before. Jessica helped Serena count the change, and then they walked over to buy a bagel from a vending machine. Serena slipped the coins in the slot and pressed the button; inmates weren't allowed to touch money.

Soon it was time for pictures. The inmate photographer suggested that they take the photographs outdoors. Ordinarily, Jessica loved having her picture taken. When George was in the M.C.C., he would say, "Baby, take a roll of thirty-six." He sent her magazine pictures of poses for her to copy. Now she seemed self-conscious and tentative. Instead of turning to the side to show off her profile, as most girls did when they were pregnant, she faced the camera. She removed her prison-issue glasses and positioned herself beside a bush. Serena looked as though she wanted to slip behind the thick, scratchy branches, but Jessica hugged her in.

"Come on," Jessica said quietly. She took Serena's hand. Serena placed her other hand on her hip and tried to smile.

After the twins were born, Jessica returned to prison in a dark mood. Her feelings for Díaz had cooled. "Whatever I felt for him, it all turned dead when he didn't turn up in the hospital," she said. She was glad that she'd decided to carry the pregnancy to term, but she hardly saw her sons before Evelyn came to collect them. One of the officers who was assigned to Jessica's hospital room even confiscated the babies' footprints. Close friends knew to leave her alone. She slept a lot and refused to eat. She brooded for days at a time.

Evelyn and Lourdes had planned to raise the twins, but this arrangement soon fell apart, and the boys followed their older siblings to Rosa. But this was only Jessica's latest disappointment with her mother. Lourdes rarely visited or wrote, and she almost never sent money. When she appeared at Danbury, the summer after the boys were born, her daughter was initially less than welcoming.

"She finally getting tits," Jessica said, gazing at her mother. "Ma, you fat. You aren't just chubby, you are fat. So tell me, what, are you pregnant or is it a tumor or what?"

"I don't *know*," Lourdes said beseechingly. She pouted into her double chin. "I have to go to the doctor's. That's why I can't stay. I have to see a social worker."

"You don't need to see no social worker. You can talk to me."

"Do my hair?" Lourdes's hair was long, and when she lifted it off her neck Jessica noticed that she was wearing the gold chain with the two tiny gold boxing gloves. Jessica touched them tenderly. "He'd be surprised that I still have that," Jessica said. "Probably thinks I sold it." Then she asked Lourdes the questions she always asked. It was a litany of lost objects, as if Jessica could never accept her mother's failure to safeguard what she was holding for her. What became of the purple shearling coat? The leathers? The gold chains? The rings?

Lourdes recited her lines: "I don't know," and "I told you." She let the implication of the pauses do the work. Jessica bent forward. "Give me your earrings," she whispered. She sat back and said

DAY JOB

Taco Bell employee.

STEPHEN KRONINGER

I got the job because I needed money to spend going to movies, diners—that kind of thing. So I came to Taco Bell with my friend Stacy. I work mostly evenings, after school. My job is I, like, basically make the tacos! The meat comes in boxes that have bags inside, and those bags you boil to heat up the meat. That's how you make tacos. And I'm very good at it. It's actually helpful being left-handed, the way the steam line is set up. I have the tacos in my right hand, the little meat scooper in my left hand, and I throw them down to my right, so I'm maximum efficiency!

I end up doing more work than I think I'm paid for. Like, for example, when they deliver all the food I actually put it into the walk-in refrigerator. The sauces, which come in powdered form and liquid form, lettuce—everything. It's all pre-bagged and boxed. The lettuce is pre-chopped. Bags of nacho cheese in liquid form. Like a bag of blood, but yellow.

Sometimes you screw up, like if you don't prepare enough chips and you serve 'em cold. Fortunately, no one even knows. It's just an added bonus when the chips are warm. And, also, remember that the cheese is warm, so people can't tell if the chips are warm. But I'm into everything being the way I think it should be. It's a pain in the ass, but, you know, I'm the one person who gets it right.

I don't know why I give a shit about this stuff. Nobody ever compliments me or thanks me or anything. I was Employee of the Month once, but that was actually kind of a joke because they first gave it to me and then I got beat out by this kid who's retarded. The manager came over to me and said, "Amy, I was going to make you Employee of the Month, but this lady sent me a letter about how the retarded kid should be Employee of the Month, and how can I say no, 'cause, after all, he's retarded, and he's working, and how fabulous is that?" And I agree, but I was still a better employee! He should get it fair and square, he shouldn't get it because he's retarded! He should get it because *he's* Employee of the Month!

But, whatever. When you're Employee of the Month, they give you a crappy T-shirt you probably would never wear because it's really itchy, and they give you five dollars' worth of free food. Which means nothing, because you eat the food all the time. You don't get your picture or a plaque on the wall or anything.

It's an O.K. job, though. The only bad thing is you reek of tacos. Your skin smells like it, your hair smells like it, your little hat thingy smells like it. And at school—I mean, I shower before I go to school, but I have to bring in my uniform, and it smells! The good things are just—well, I get paid.

—*Interviewed by J. Milligan*

CAN'T HANDLE
SUDDEN WEALTH
HELP YOURSELF
LORENZ

• •

casually, "Let me try your earrings on."

"Be careful," Lourdes warned, glancing at the guard on duty.

"One hand washes the other," Jessica said, explaining that the guard was "a friend."

"Sometimes the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing," Lourdes said.

After the visit, Lourdes stood outside waiting for Jessica to be searched, so she could appear in a window for a final wave goodbye.

Lourdes retrieved a charm bracelet from her pocket and slipped it on. It was a gift from a new boyfriend, whom Jessica didn't approve of, because she'd heard he was violent. The letters spelled out "LOVE." "Good thing she didn't take this," Lourdes said. "I'd have to get another one new! See how she took my earrings like that?"

Jessica appeared. Lourdes waved. She waved with every step down the hill until she couldn't see her daughter anymore.

LITTLE JESSICA

The longer Jessica was in prison, the more strongly she identified with her ten-year-old daughter. Although they had very little contact, she felt she could imagine what Serena was going through. In 1996, Queenie offered to tell Jessica's fortune for her birthday. She told Jessica that Serena was going to run away. "You're never gonna see her again," she warned. Jessica couldn't get Queenie's prophecy out of her head. Her mind filled with memories of herself as a teen-ager, when she had sometimes cut herself to relieve the anguish. Would things be as bad for her daughter? "Serena reminds me of me," Jessica often said.

But it was Rosa and Marisol who oversaw the girl's coming of age. In 1996, Serena learned that her favorite aunt was moving to Troy. By then, Joey was back in prison, and he had married another woman. Marisol and her children would be just four doors down from Rosa's. Serena was thrilled. On the brick wall below the white siding next to the front door, Serena chalked, in screwball script, the words "Marisol's House."

Marisol's door was always open to Jessica's kids. Marisol let Serena and her friends rollerblade around the kitchen and living room, and she would abandon her housework "like the quickness" to join the girls in double-dutch. While Marisol cooked, Serena would sit on the counter, keeping her company. They watched talk shows and traded advice. Serena complained to Marisol about Rosa's rules. Rosa's discipline seemed onerous: when Serena started developing, Rosa wouldn't allow her to wear anything tight or revealing. Marisol defended Serena: "She look beautiful. She all into her body."

"She a child, Marisol," Rosa said. "It ain't right."

By 1997, Rosa was working full-time. She needed Serena to help with her younger siblings, and Serena, now twelve, chafed at the responsibility. She was already looking eternally bored—languishing in doorways, leaning against parked cars, scuffing the dirt around the neighborhood's embattled trees. After school, whenever she could, she brought her little brothers to Marisol's house.

Marisol noted that she had inherited her mother's voluptuous body, and privately referred to her as "a little Jessica." She also served as a mail drop, relaying messages from Jessica to Serena, and providing Serena with stationery and stamps to write her mother back. More and more, the subject of boys appeared in Serena's letters, after updates on her twin sisters and brothers, and on her progress in school. In March of 1998, Serena wrote:

> I went to the store with Mommy Rosa and they'es boys was outside and kept on

> looking at me. So I didn't want M. Rosa to leave me by myself in the store but the baby's had to use the bathroom so she went around the corner to take them + ask me to pay for the stuff so I did, but when I came out the boys started kicking it to me you know trying to talk to me. One boy was like what's up cutie and was like hi, he was like, don't you live on 11th street, I was like no, he was like yeah you don't remember me I was riding my bike I was like no, then he ask me for the 7 digits (my #) I told him no because I am already taken. This boy was so cute. I only said that I was taken because I am not allowed to have no boyfriends. . . .This other boy try to kick it to me in front of my mother and just ignored him cause he was butt ugly. Well mommy, I gotta go I love you so very mush and of course miss you more then N-Ething.

Marisol and Rosa had the same hopes for Serena—that she not get pregnant, that she finish school, maybe even go to college—but their strategies were different. Rosa's approach was to repress all signs of womanhood, whereas Marisol thought it wiser to tell Serena the truths as she knew them. Still, Marisol found it hard to be optimistic: one of Serena's friends already had a baby, and another was expecting. "She'll come out pregnant when she's young," Marisol predicted dolefully.

When Lourdes and the girls visited Jessica in the spring of 1998, eight months before her release date, she was in a sombre mood. She had been in a residential-therapy unit, and her abandonment of Serena increasingly haunted her. She worried less about the twins; they really belonged to Rosa, who had raised them since they were babies. But Serena was old enough to have memories of the early days. Jessica wondered what Serena remembered of Boy George, or of her father, Kuri, who had been shot dead around the time Jessica went to prison.

After Jessica greeted the girls, they sat together in a corner of the visiting room, and Jessica started her usual primping and grooming. She styled the twins' hair, using her fingers as a comb, and picked lint from their clothes. She noticed a plastic price-tag thread on Serena's shoe and bit it off. She braided Serena's hair and started to talk to her about the kind of night life they would share when she came home. "They gonna think we sisters. We gonna dye our hair blond. We don't have to ask anybody. I be like, 'C'mon, Serena, get dressed! We going to a club!' "

"*Ay*," Lourdes said, but the exasperation felt fraudulent.

"You just jealous," Jessica said. When she was a teen-ager, she took her mother dancing. She made Lourdes pretend they were sisters, but the ruse wouldn't work anymore. Lourdes had aged visibly over the past several years. She lumbered instead of scurrying—circulatory problems made it hard for her to walk. Smock dresses had replaced the Lycra leggings. Hush Puppies had replaced the stiletto heels.

Serena flapped her knees distractedly. "Your legs! Keep your legs closed!" Lourdes said sharply. Serena rolled her eyes.

Jessica noticed the young son of another inmate. He stood beside another boy in front of the vending machines. "Serena, come on. Look how cute that boy is!"

"You so bad," Serena said.

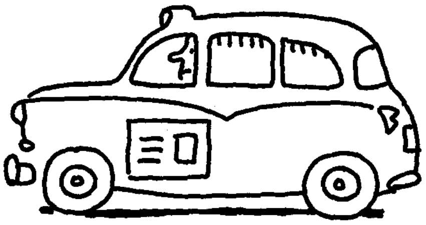
"Come on! Come on! You so pretty! Look how cute he is!" Jessica pulled Serena's hand and positioned her in line. Serena bought some candy. She leaned into Jessica, shyly.

"You so bad, you so bad," Serena repeated. Jessica smiled.

STEPPING OUT

At eight-fifty in the morning on December 17, 1998, exactly seven years after she entered prison, Jessica left the Danbury Correctional Facility. She took a bus to Port Authority and then a subway to the Bronx. She had a streak of gray in her hair and twenty-five extra pounds. She was thirty years old.

Boy George, in a maximum-security prison cell in Beaumont, Texas, said that he was happy about Jessica's freedom. "Not envious at all," he said. "I was praying for her the other day." The only thing that worried him, he said, was Jessica's susceptibility to the influence of others. "She's got to say, 'Am I gonna be a free-for-all? Or am I gonna be a person who has limits here?' Is it all about sex, Calvin Klein, is she gonna parlay with that? Or is she gonna say, 'I got five children. Now, that's a lot of children.' " He paused. "If she doesn't find the right man, she did all that time for nothing. She did that time for shit."



He said that he'd like to hear from Jessica, whom he affectionately calls "the troubled child," or "the crazy one." Boy George has written letters to Jessica in care of Lourdes, but he hasn't heard from her.

After her release from prison, Jessica spent December and the early part of January, 1999, in a halfway house just north of Fordham Road, in the Bronx. The halfway house was on a block with a brisk drug trade. Jessica got a job in Yonkers at a company that raises funds for churches and schools. Toward the end of January, she was allowed to move in with her sister, Evelyn. Five months later, she got her own place, a basement apartment in the north Bronx.

Jessica met her current boyfriend, Gabriel, when she went dancing one night at Jimmy's Bronx Café. A student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in Manhattan, he is thirty-two, and wants to pursue a career in law enforcement. There are always going to be criminals, he says, and there will always be a need for people to catch them. Gabriel lifts weights six times a week, and his body is muscular and well defined. He works as a recreation specialist at a state park and, to supplement his income, sometimes performs as a stripper. He is polite but reserved. "He sounds Italian," Jessica says, happily. Jessica has dated other men since getting out of prison, but this is different.

Within days of their meeting, she brought Lourdes to meet him. Lourdes promptly warned him to treat Jessica properly, because "my daughter's been abused enough." She then crowned him as her son-in-law. On the ride home, when Jessica told her that Gabriel attended John Jay College, Lourdes nearly yelped. "Not everybody gets to go to that college," she shouted, as though a victory had been won. She ordered Jessica not to play head games with him.

Jessica hopes that Gabriel is the one. He calls her back when she pages him. He lets her know of his whereabouts, especially when he goes out with his friends. He writes her love notes, leaves tender messages on her answering machine, offers little gifts—a Beanie Baby, vanilla shower gel. She wants to lose the weight she gained in prison, and he has promised to help her, although he tells her that he likes her body just the way it is.

Since September of last year, Serena has had a boyfriend, Manuel, a slender boy with liquid eyes and a Roman nose. To Rosa's way of thinking, a nineteen-year-old with earrings and a tattoo is only interested in one thing. As soon as she found out about him, she forbade Serena to date him. "All she was doing was caring, but caring for me in the wrong way," Serena says. She and Manuel met on the sly. Serena says, "I grew to love him, I had to see him. I'd call him when she was in the bathroom, tell him, 'Meet me at Video World.' " She'd run through the housing project, taking the dirt path that led behind the dollar store, and jump into his idling Sunbird. He took her to McDonald's and treated her to her favorite Value Meal. "He always made sure I had, regardless," Serena says.

Jessica has supported the relationship between Serena and Manuel. During Christmas vacation, she arranged for a rendezvous between them in the Bronx; shortly afterward, though, Rosa learned that Serena had failed all her classes, and grounded her. Jessica and Serena commiserated on the telephone, sometimes three times a day. Friction increased between Rosa and Jessica. Marisol worries about Serena's being torn between the two, but now she has a fifth child and a full-time job, and she has little time to spare for her own children, let alone her niece.

THE DAILY BUGLE
$165 BILLION!!!
HUGE AMOUNT OF MONEY!
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!
$80 BILLION
NOT AS IMPRESSIVE AS IT ONCE WAS
see p. 2
$
$5 BILLION
YAWN
$
see p. 12
$400 MILLION
SO WHAT?
see p. 21
$100 MILLION
NOBODY CARES
see p. 45
see p. 89

FULL CUSTODY

In February, Jessica filed for full custody of Serena. Rosa has not contested the application; she believes that Serena will be safe with Jessica, and Serena wants to move back to the Bronx. Last month, Jessica and Lourdes went up to Troy for the custody hearing. That morning, after Serena had put her four-year-old brothers on their school bus, she, her mother, and her grandmother watched the movie "Gremlins" in the *sala*, surrounded by mementos from birthday parties and baby showers and christenings. Serena and Jessica cuddled on the sofa. Serena had pulled her hair back loosely in a bun. She wore a black cotton peasant dress with bright embroidery trim, which Lourdes had given her. She looked the way Jessica does in a photograph taken at her baby shower, just before Serena was born.

"You didn't even notice my new tattoo," Jessica prompted Serena coyly. She lifted her chin to the light. She had a beauty mark inked above her lip, on the left, just like Marilyn Monroe.

"I told you already," Serena said, brushing her away good-naturedly.

Jessica explained that the friend who gave her the mole had promised to alter her six Boy George tattoos for free. She traced her body with her manicured fingernail, showing how she planned to cover the poem on her shoulder with a butterfly, to blacken the George from the heart on her right thigh. She wanted to get a new tattoo around her ankle: the two masks of drama, with the inscription "Cry now, laugh later," the inversion meant to celebrate her new life.

"What are you gonna be, a newspaper?" Lourdes asked.

"That's art," Jessica said.

"That's fucking disgusting," Lourdes said. "When a man kisses you—"

"If a man can't handle it, that's his problem," Jessica said.

" 'Property of George' across your ass?" Lourdes went on. She kept her eyes on the TV.

Serena and Jessica went upstairs to dress. Serena's bedroom walls were covered with magazine cutouts of Puff

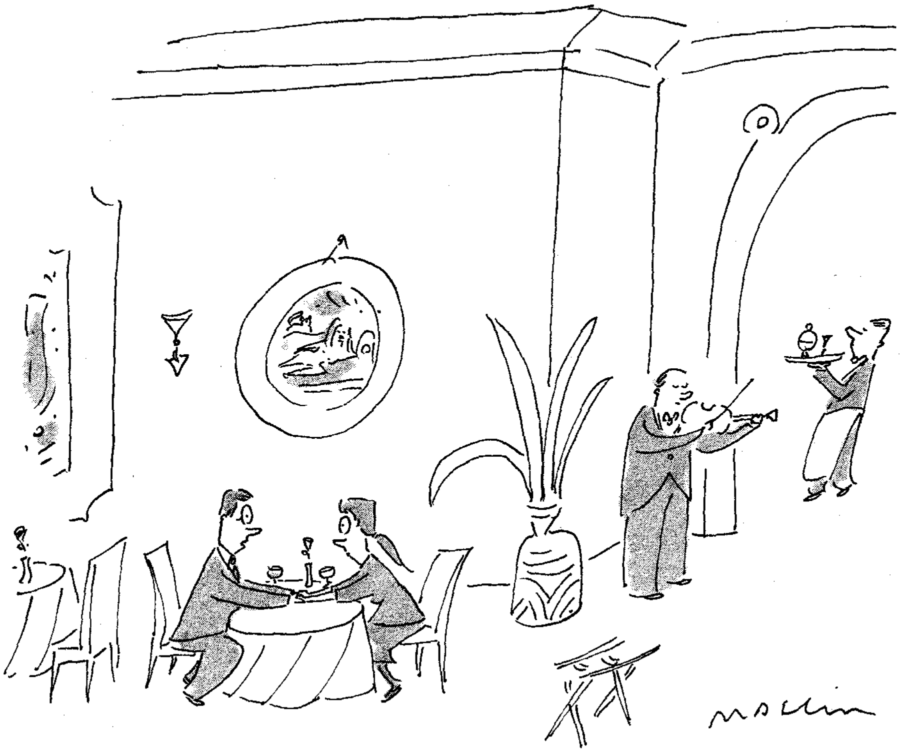
Daddy, Whitney Houston, Ginuwine, and Lauryn Hill. Beside them she'd hung photographs of Jessica, Evelyn, and Marisol with her children, and several drawings that Jessica sent her from prison. In one, a melancholy angel drops a handful of hearts down to earth from a cloud. On the old entertainment center that she uses as a bureau is a favor from a cousin's Sweet Sixteen: a girl in a fancy dress afloat in a champagne glass, purple and white ribbons spilling from the rim. Although Serena is only fourteen, she and Jessica have already started to plan for her party, so that they'll have time to save. Serena wants to pass out flyers the way night clubs do, and trail a banner behind a Goodyear blimp. Anything's possible, Jessica told her.

Jessica popped in a house tape she'd brought, a gift from Gabriel. Music blasted from the speakers.

"Jessica! Serena! Turn down the music!" Lourdes yelled. Then she came upstairs to join them.

Serena outfitted her grandmother in a pair of sweats, and loaned her a pair of sneakers, a gift from Manuel. He also gave Serena a necklace that reads "I Love My Baby," for Valentine's Day. Serena likes jewelry, but she has forbidden her mother to wear the necklace with the gold boxing-glove charm; she has heard about how Boy George used to mistreat Jessica, and doesn't like what it represents.

At the custody hearing, everyone agreed that Serena should finish the school year in Troy and stay on for the summer, in order to complete an internship at an educational and employment-training program for public-housing kids that Rosa steered her toward.



"I meant everything I said last night, especially the part about how diversifying your equity portfolio allows you to participate in growth potential."

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Lourdes was evicted from her apartment recently, and is currently camped out on a futon sofa at Jessica's, where she feels in the way. Just before Lourdes's arrival, Jessica quit her job; she says that her boss was disrespectful to her. Moreover, the hours had not been ideal. Jessica wants her next job to be strictly nine-to-five, so that it won't intrude upon her responsibilities. "When five o'clock comes," she says, "and I have to go home and cook and take care of my daughter, that's exactly what I'm going to do." Jessica says that her main concern is her family: her reunion with Serena, her relationships with Gabriel and with her other children, her mother's precarious health.

Lourdes is unsure of Jessica's future. She marvels at her daughter's ability to sustain such open faith in love: "A broken rib, that mends. A broken heart, that never mends." She is more confident about her granddaughter's prospects. If she were to tell it straight to Serena, she would say this: "Honey, the boys that are growing up now, it's only for your pussy. A girl has to be smart now. Study. Be somebody." If you're ignorant, Lourdes believes, you have to use your looks to survive, but with an education you can support yourself, men or no men. "They respect you, because they know they could lose you right there and then."

Four days a week, Serena takes the bus to her program, in downtown Troy. She drops her book bag and plunks herself down in front of a state-of-the-art computer. She spins around on the office chair as she waits for the modem to connect. Self-portraits of public-housing kids surround her, alongside African proverbs and quotations from Olive Schreiner. A poster reads, "Keep It Afloat."

Serena loves computers. Her current project involves developing her own Web site. On it, she has posted her autobiography: "My name is Serena. I am 14 years old. I am Puerto Rican, 100%. . . . My favorite subjects are English and Math. Lunch is my favorite time of the school day because I get to talk to my friends. . . .

"My birth mother was put in prison when I was five years old. . . . I decided to move with my twin sisters' godmother because they were living with her. She took me in with no problem. None of us are her real kids, but she still took all of us . . . kids in and raised us as her own. My birth mother is now out of jail, and I am moving with her in the summer to catch up on our relationship. . . .

"In the future, I would like to be a teacher. I would first like to finish high school and go on to college. When I'm done with school, I would like to work on getting a nice house and getting a good job. Then I would like to get married and have two kids, a boy and a girl. Then I just want to raise my kids. When they are all grown up, I want to travel the world.

"I want to teach kindergarten class because they are easier than older kids. I would like to go to Fordham University. It is in Bronx, NY, where I used to live." ♦

JOURNAL

THE QUARTER OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

How greed becomes a way of life.

BY DAVID DENBY

1/1/00 Nasdaq +85.6% for 1999

Today, while speaking to a friend on the telephone, I suddenly notice that I am jabbering—racing ahead and jumping over verbal fences, mashing participles, dropping qualifiers. I find that I have trouble saying one thing at a time; I have to say two things, or three, tucking statistics into my words as I go, joining pieces of information by association rather than by cause and effect. As I hang up, a little worn out by myself, I wonder, Who is this speed freak, this *nut*, gathering and expelling information in charged clumps, like a spasmodic Web site spilling bytes? This blurting activity on my part is new. I talk myself breathless, and sometimes make other people feel pressured, even bullied. What's causing the rush?

At fifty-six, I am no crazier than I was twenty years ago. But my habits have changed. Among other things, I spend a lot of time watching CNBC, one of the cable financial networks. The boys and girls of financial reporting, the Stalwarts, my new friends, go on the air every trading day at five in the morning and continue all through the day, mopping up after the market closes, at four, with recaps, surveys, and predictions. I can sit there for hours following the jags, up and down, of the three market indexes and listening to the Stalwarts interview strategists, analysts, and savants of various sorts, who spread their blankets and display their urns and gourds and give their opinions of shifting currents in the bazaar. Not all these people practice speed-talking—Joe Kernen, CNBC's stocks editor and a former broker, caresses the underside of a new I.P.O. like a gent taking his time. Yet many of them race like corsairs. They are driven by the tempo of the market, the pulsing, darting flow of money around the globe, its progression intensified, as the Stalwarts break for a commercial, by that rhythmic clickety-clack of electronic noise needled by a snare drum: *dig-a-dig-a-dig-a-dig-a-DIG-a-dig-a . . .*

Only eight or nine years ago, eager to escape the media noise and hustle, I was trying to slow down. I longed for the unfolding power of *duration*—the slow-moving images in Antonioni's mournfully beautiful movies, the magnificent weighted tread of a Bruckner symphony, the Rolling Stones songs that seemed to go on forever. I hate my new acceleration, though I know perfectly well what has caused it. In this boom period, you have the illusion that if you can just grab hold of the flying coattails of the New Economy investments you have the chance of getting rich very quickly. My new urgency is driven by greed: I am talking in Internet time. Wealth, much more than ever, seems a function of quickness. The market is a kind of crass metaphysical whip that hastens the annihilation of the passing moment: there is only the next instant, and the next, rushing toward you, and in the Internet age an ideally informed person would never sleep at all but would trade the markets and chase news and rumors through the links twenty-four hours a day.

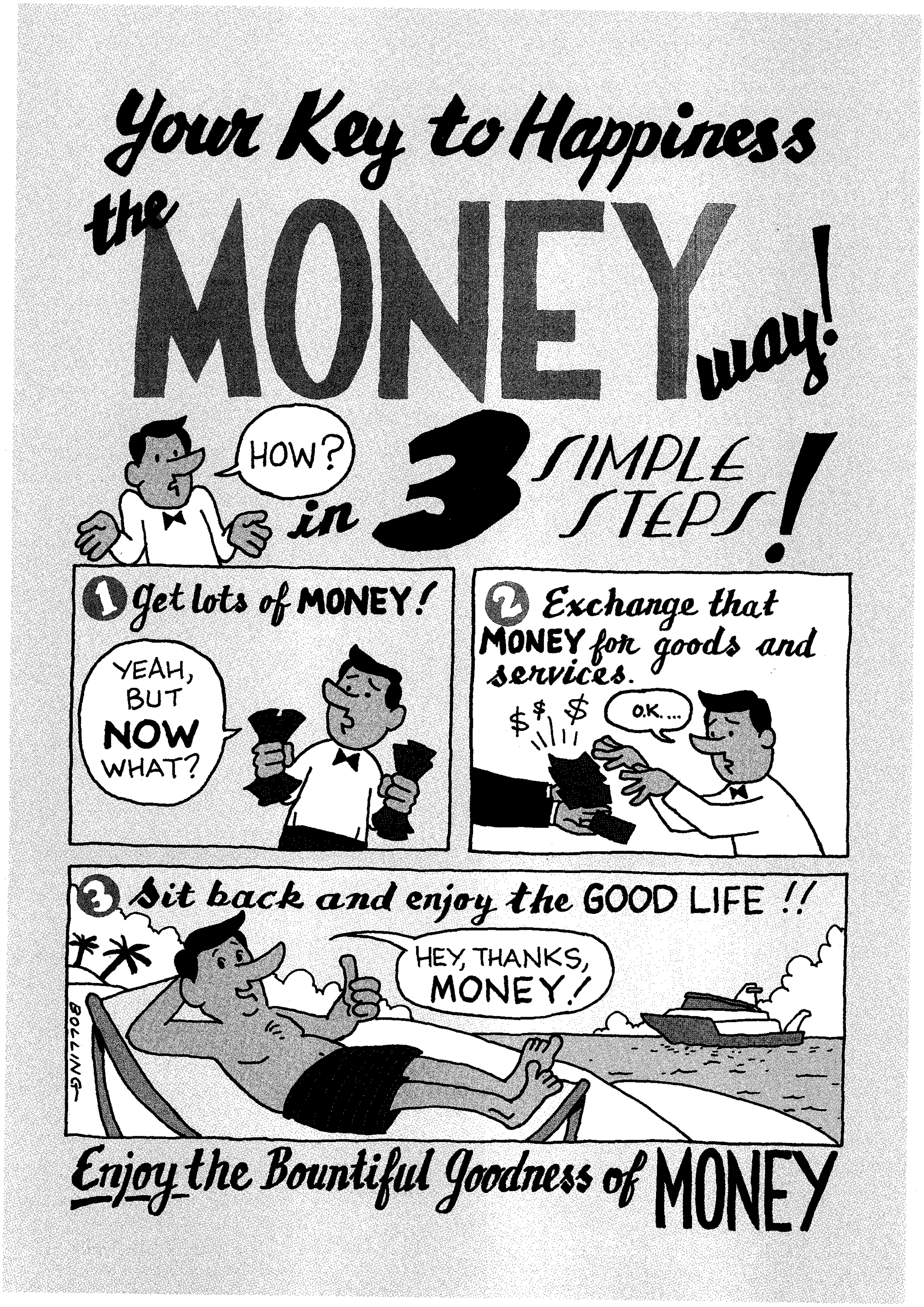
I have decided that I want—I need—to make a million dollars in the stock market this year. For a wealthy man or woman, this no longer seems like a great deal of money. For a journalist on a salary, it is a great deal indeed, and the wish for it as a year's gain would have seemed ridiculous no more than a few years ago. For the record, I do not want to buy a yacht or a house in the country or a five-thousand-dollar gas grill (what would you do with it—barbecue gold-leafed weenies?). No, I don't want to buy anything in particular. I want the money so I can hold on to something very important to me.

I am amazed at myself—amazed that a writer with no business experience would place in jeopardy his substance and his peace and would risk falling among the rotting railroad ties and worthless certificates of a dozen schemes gone bust. But, like many Americans, I have begun to wonder if risk is now something I can afford to avoid, and if the usual grim historical lesson—the cautionary tale of euphoria, panic, and collapse—has any necessary power over me. The New Economy seems to be producing a New Man who, in imitation of the economy itself, is going through wrenching changes in the way he lives, works, buys, and interacts with other people. All of which makes me anxious, at times unbearably so, and finding myself in an odd predicament—greedy, obsessed, and ignorant—I have been looking around for companions and gurus to guide me in my steps. I must meet some people in the Internet and investment scenes in New York; I will read some economic history and literature—that is, the literature of greed—as I shift the pieces of my little pile from one place to another.

1/4/00 Nas -229.46, Dow -359.58

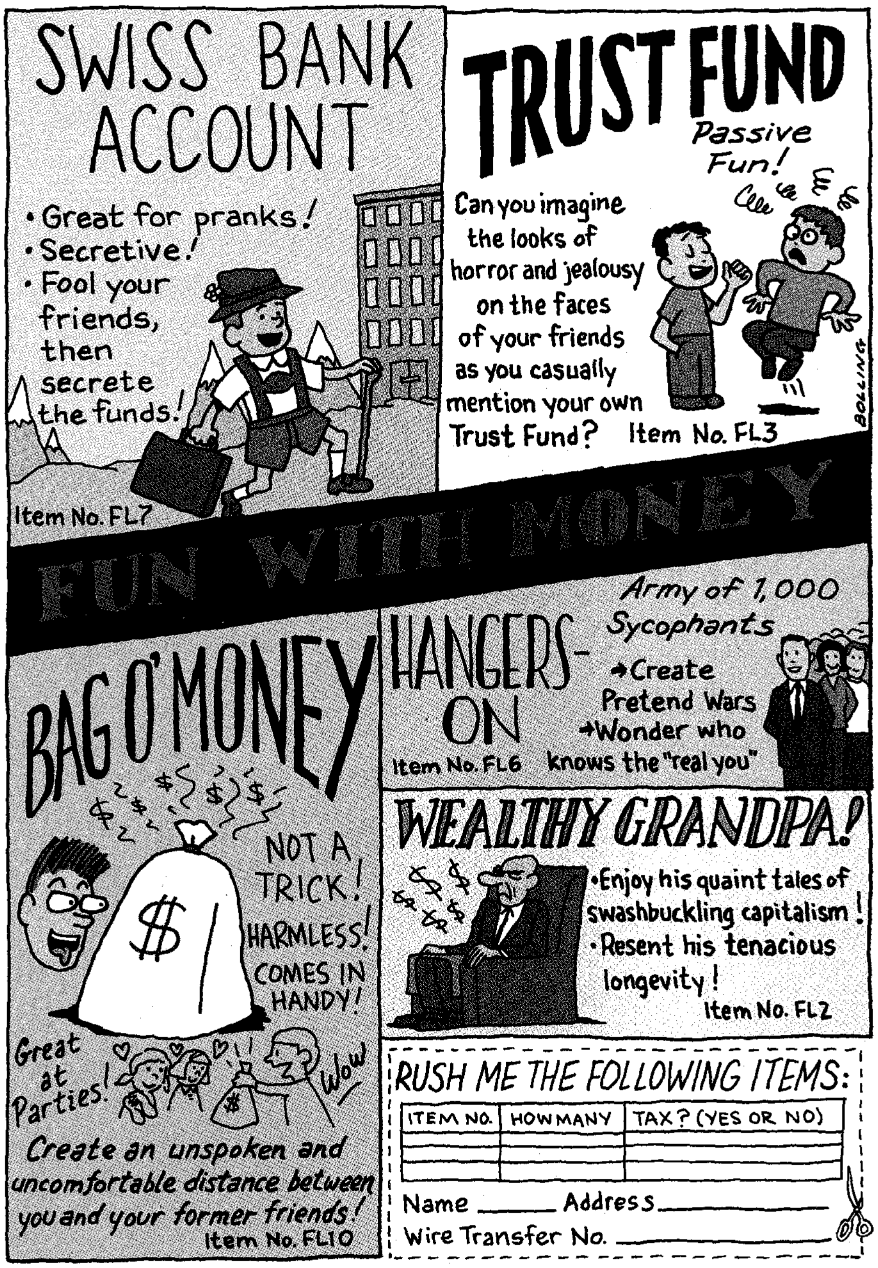
A big sell-off right at the beginning of the year. Are we at the end of the bull, the beginning of a panic? If we're at the end, then maybe historical precedent does have something to teach us. The displays of folly in London at the end of the South Sea Bubble of 1720 reached a carnival atmosphere of giddiness and gross absurdity—crazily extravagant parties, jewel-embroidered dresses, excited mobs roaming the streets. Excessive expenditure and social turmoil may be signs of too much capital sloshing around the edges of a speculative boom. Well, there has never been a period of wealth in New York like the one we are enjoying right now, though the new fortunes have not yet burst forth in comparable displays of conspicuous consumption. The California roots of the Internet craze, with its puritanical-utopian communitarian longings, have had a softening, even frowning, effect on mere display.

RUBEN BOLLING


Your Key to Happiness
the MONEY way!
HOW?
in 3 SIMPLE STEPS!
1 Get lots of MONEY!
YEAH, BUT NOW WHAT?
2 Exchange that MONEY for goods and services.
$ $ $
O.K....
3 Sit back and enjoy the GOOD LIFE!!
HEY, THANKS, MONEY!
BOLLING
Enjoy the Bountiful Goodness of MONEY

The big-swinging-dick flamboyance of eighties Wall Street has been replaced by the earnestly hip Silicon Valley entrepreneur in black clothes. It's the investment culture itself that's been wild and perhaps frivolous: the millions flung by venture-capital firms at questionable ideas for startup companies; the increase in the price of technology and biotech stocks by multiples of twelve, twenty, or even forty within a six-month period; the obsession everywhere with the market. People trade tips at the newsstand; a man exultantly shouts out the name of a Scandinavian telecommunications company ("Ericsson!") as he passes me on the street. At my local hardware store, day traders compare notes at market close ("I bailed on Qualcomm early and got killed"; "I held it till three and made eight and a quarter"), and I myself have conducted strategy sessions with strangers during intermission at Carnegie Hall.

The current period of speculative energy has a unique character of high-mindedness and hope. The usual desire to get rich quick has merged with the sunrise ardor of creating a new way of buying, communicating, and doing business. Clutching copies of *The Red Herring* and *The Industry Standard*, we information-technology investors mutter the mantras to ourselves: The use of the Internet doubles every hundred days; the computer box is dead, but wireless is taking off like a rocket; total business-to-business transactions on the Internet will go from a hundred and forty-five billion dollars in 1999 to perhaps two trillion in 2004. But are these expectations realistic? Or do they function as a kind of pornography of hope? In such an overstimulated climate, there is a measure of relief in just buying something. Right or wrong, at least it's an act, a move. This is known as "buyer's panic"—the fear of being left out, or hosed, as some stock goes up by a multiple of six.


SWISS BANK ACCOUNT
• Great for pranks!
• Secretive!
• Fool your friends, then secrete the funds!
Item No. FL7
TRUST FUND
Passive Fun!
Can you imagine the looks of horror and jealousy on the faces of your friends as you casually mention your own Trust Fund? Item No. FL3
BOLLING
FUN WITH MONEY
BAG O' MONEY
NOT A TRICK! HARMLESS! COMES IN HANDY!
Great at Parties!
Wow
Create an unspoken and uncomfortable distance between you and your former friends! Item No. FL10
HANGERS-ON
Army of 1,000 Sycophants
→Create Pretend Wars
→Wonder who knows the "real you"
Item No. FL6
WEALTHY GRANDPA!
•Enjoy his quaint tales of swashbuckling capitalism!
•Resent his tenacious longevity!
Item No. FL2
RUSH ME THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:
ITEM NO.
HOW MANY
TAX? (YES OR NO)
Name
Address
Wire Transfer No.

Over and over, I brood about my story, my *blunder.* It is a primal scene, the kind of wound that everyone carries around during a speculative period. My story takes place in our neighborhood Japanese restaurant, Bon 75, on Broadway, where my wife and I had lunch with our broker in 1986—early March, 1986, just before Microsoft went public.

"There's this stock," I said, holding a piece of sushi between chopsticks. "Microsoft. It makes the operating system for I.B.M. and all the clones."

"Never heard of it," our broker said, dipping his vegetable tempura in sauce. If his right hand had been free, he might have written down the name of the company. But it wasn't, and the moment passed; I ate my salmon roe and failed to insist that he follow up, even though, at some level, I *knew.* The ten thousand or so dollars that we could have afforded to invest in 1986 would now be worth almost eight million. At the height of the South Sea Bubble, Alexander Pope wrote his broker, "Tis Ignominious (in this Age of Hope and Golden Mountains) not to Venture."

Thinking about my story makes me sick. But then why do I also feel sick when I invest in some New Economy stock or fund? Success produces its own kind of hell: you might lose your gains. Pope made money in the South Sea speculation, but some months after that letter to his broker, at a time when everything had gone bust and thousands were ruined, he announced that "God has punish'd the avaritious as he often punishes sinners, in their own way, in the very sin itself: the thirst for gain was their crime, and that thirst continued became their punishment and ruin."

1/10/00 A.O.L. announces purchase of Time Warner for $165 billion

Nasdaq, recovering from the sell-off, goes up 167.05, the Dow to a record 11,572.20. A feeling of boundless possi-

RUBEN BOLLING

bilities excites investors everywhere. To hell with Pope's divine wrath. Whatever happens to A.O.L. and Time Warner, enormous new wealth is being created, and Alan Greenspan, like the Holy Ghost brooding with sweet wings over the earth, will protect us, measuring out the milk of liquidity, harmonizing our virtues and vices into an orderly progression toward salvation.

Feeling calm for a day, I have lunch with an old friend—I shall call him Craig Rumford—who is always calm. He is an investment banker, a mergers-and-acquisitions specialist, comfortably stationed at one of the most distinguished banks in the city. His corner-office windows take in a generous swath of the East River and Brooklyn Heights. He is a father of four, a fine-looking man with a high, intellectual forehead, a reader of serious books. I admire him greatly and want to understand what he does in his work, and this produces a certain comic element in our friendship. Whenever we meet, Craig wants to talk about books, music, and movies, and I want to talk about money. I suppose each of us envies the other his profession. But, despite Craig's calm, I have noticed, over the last few years, a certain regret creeping into his tone. During the eighties, he was in the middle of the leveraged-buyout frenzy, a player in several big mergers. Now, as we repair to a company dining room looking out over Staten Island and the Statue of Liberty (the rich are different from us: they have views), he sighs a few times, as if the action had passed him by. He is not that icon of the moment, an entrepreneur. He would like to leap into venture capital, but, with four children, he can't, really, and his frustration passes across the table to me.

1/15/00 Times pans investors

The *Times* published a front-page article today saying that too many people are selling stocks after a few months or less, paying short-term rather than long-term capital-gains taxes, and making less money than they should. It's as if the feverish mentality of the day trader, who holds stocks for five minutes or half a day, had infected millions of people.

History, like a dark, ranting prophet, calls us fools. The *tulpenwoerde*, or tulip mania, in Holland, in the sixteen-thirties, is the paradigm of greed and speculation. It's always evoked in a boom period, and in the midst of the current bull market one is irked to hear of it—irked by the perfection of the historical didacticism, the superb equipoise of the banking and shipping power collapsing into near-chaos, and over what? Over flowers! The Turks had introduced tulips into Europe in the sixteenth century, and what adorned the gardens of courtiers, scholars, and bankers in Antwerp and Brussels passed, by the next century, to the Netherlands, where a trace of brilliant color, especially in the more exotic varieties, livened up the drab landscape. Botanists and aristocrats owned the tulips first, but a given strain could be reproduced through the splitting of outgrowths, so a rarefied taste became a marketable commodity in more ordinary bulbs, and in the winter of every year a kind of "futures" mania developed. People met in "colleges" (i.e., taverns) and traded contracts for the bulbs that would sprout in the spring. Sometimes they offered paper attesting to their credit, sometimes real assets, like oxen or furniture or tools, or even farms.

A significant part of the sanest, cleanest, most orderly society the world has ever known got caught up in *windhandel*, or "airy trade." Players traded their paper upward until the whole thing collapsed, in early February, 1637, when actual delivery of the spring tulips was looming and no further speculation that year was possible. Late buyers and people trading on credit got ruined.

Charles Kindleberger, in his menacing 1989 book, "Manias, Panics, and Crashes," has traced a deep structure common to speculative periods. At first, there is a "displacement," perhaps in the form of a new species of investment. This is followed by "positive feedback," as inexperienced investors throw money into the market, followed by euphoria, as prices rise and common sense disintegrates. In this late period, the speculation spreads to different kinds of goods. New companies spring up and are floated in the market, and investors leverage their rising assets. You can guess the rest: overextended credit, swindles and frauds, and eventual collapse of the market.

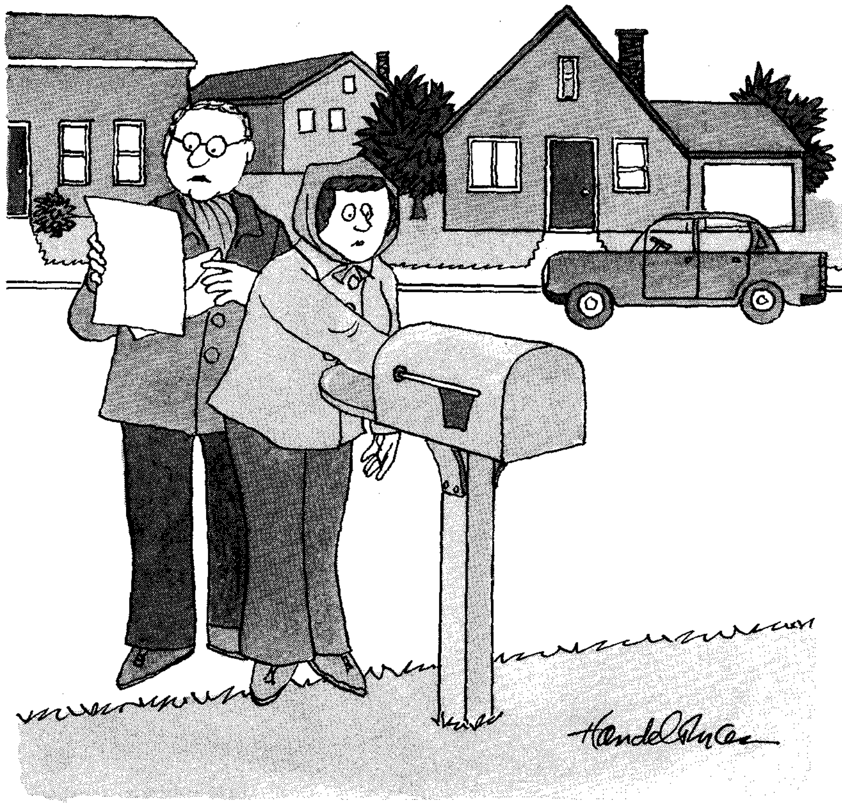
How much of this describes our current moment? A fibre-optic cable, I tell myself, has a longer season than a tulip, but obviously the many technology stocks selling at a hundred and fifty or two hundred times earnings (if they even have earnings) can't all be winners in the future. Alan Greenspan is worried that more and more people are buying stocks on margin, and the newspapers claim that white-collar crime is rising. And yet, and yet . . . my own portfolio is going up rapidly, and, if this be *windhandel*, thank heaven for the wind.

1/19/00 YHOO +22$^{13}/_{26}$

In a minor act of defiance, I liquidate, with my wife's approval, our holdings in two bond funds and cancel a life-insurance policy. In recent years, I have come to hate the idea of insurance so much that I unconsciously rebelled and "forgot" to pay the premiums. The policy has built up some dividends, which I can invest, and that's part of the attraction of cancelling. Trust the market to build a sufficient nest egg. Trust the market!

I can't say that I was ever a particularly bold or successful investor in the past. Before the nineties, I had no extra money to invest, and I balanced money in my 401(k) plan between stocks and bonds. I figured, like millions of others, that I didn't know enough to take chances; and I was unwilling to devote any time to learning more. John Maynard Keynes wrote that investment is "intolerably boring and over-exacting to any one who is entirely exempt from the gambling instinct," and for years I was exempt from that instinct. My job was to build a career, build a family. I was a middle-class professional, an Upper West Sider—the equivalent of a Dutch burgher—living among brown and gray buildings. As my wife and I earned, from jobs and freelance work and book royalties, we saved and, when we could, bought bonds through a broker or invested in safe-sounding mutual funds. But I didn't study. I barely checked the results.

My mother died in 1991, leaving me a little money, and I remember being vaguely annoyed by the responsibility of it. With a heavy heart, I began reading the *Wall Street Journal*. To my surprise, the paper's formality—pin-striped-chic single-column heads and long blocks of type—gave me a distinct tingle of pleasure. This, clearly, was grownup stuff. The *Journal* possessed the silencing dignity of money, and from its pages I learned the commonplace gospel of diversifica-



"We do not usually acknowledge unsolicited manuscripts, but we want you to know that we tore yours into tiny pieces. Yours sincerely, The Op-Ed Page."

tion and asset allocation. As I worked through the gathering bull in 1995, I tried to add more aggressive-sounding funds to our group. I didn't make much money, but it was fun holding the tiller, occasionally catching the wind, and turning the prow this way and that.

2/10/00 Dow -55.53, Nas +122.39

The Dow Industrial average, it turns out, had its worst January in years. But the economy is booming, and tech stocks are doing fine. Better than fine, in fact—the interest-rate hike that Alan Greenspan imposed last week hasn't hurt the New Economy stocks, which raise their capital from the market itself or from venture capitalists. But the whole thing is dizzying, and a little remote, and I need to see some of the people who are driving this thing forward. I need to see what they look and sound like.

Rising at the extraordinary hour of 6:45 A.M. (film critics usually rise at ten or later, and more slowly than the Sun King), I make my way to a conference center on Desbrosses Street, in Tribeca. I leave the heavy brown nineteenth-century streets, noisy with trucks thudding over cobblestones, and enter what looks like an old loft building. On an upper floor, the landing opens into a large conference space with a glass roof and brilliant light. It is like walking into a shabby old soundstage on the Paramount lot in Hollywood and finding an enormous movie set. There is a long table set with bottles of Poland Spring water, freshly squeezed orange juice, pastries, and bagels. The attendees, about four hundred of them, have shown up for the monthly meeting of a group called New York InfoTech Forum, one of many such groups in Silicon Alley, where conferences seem to take place every day.

I enter a dense crowd in which the over-all mood is one of bounding, thriving conviviality. People introduce themselves without hesitation and whip out business cards—the cards flap back and forth like pictures of Sammy Sosa on the rear seat of a school bus. An eager young man tells me of a site devoted to grandparents. It will go after "mature demographics," addressing such issues as how to establish a "dynasty trust," and it will even set up discussion groups on such subjects as what to say to your kids if they are getting a divorce or adopting a child. (*But couldn't the mature demographics figure out these last two things on their own?*) It sounds a little dicey, though I could be wrong—with some heat the young man tells me that there are seventy *million* grandparents. (*Yeah, but how many of them surf the Web?*) I mutter my doubts to myself. Another guy has started up a site to facilitate general trade across the border from Mexico. (*But wouldn't this trade go along specialized channels that already exist?*) A young woman has a site to sell designer clothes to women. (*Why would a woman spend a thousand dollars or more for a dress that she can't try on?*)

Whatever my doubts, the eagerness is intoxicating. Certainly the haughty big-business style of yesteryear is dead. New Economy manners are "transparent," direct, unpretentious, pleasant, shameless. Circumspection is a mere irrelevance to these men and women, most of whom, at a glance, I judge to be in their thirties. They talk fast, so fast that I can't keep up with them. Some are lawyers, accountants, bankers, or venture capitalists of one sort or another, trying to expand their operation in Silicon Alley. Many of the Internet types themselves appear to be escapees from journalism, broadcasting, and advertising—the old-media professions are draining out fast. Such people are in a high state of transition, electrified and jubilant. They will link up buyers and suppliers; they will "tie in" with a company's internal applications; they will provide a "space" to auction off the toenail clippings of Madonna's masseur. They fix me with their eyes, waiting for a sign that I get it, that I feel it, that I realize the idea has . . . *scalability.*

We settle down for a speech from Mark L. Walsh, the C.E.O. of VerticalNet, one of the hot new business-to-business (B2B) Internet companies. Tall, forty-fiveish, with wire-frame glasses and a full head of curly gray hair, Walsh, who has a background in cable broadcasting, issues a torrent of claims, boasts, and visions. VerticalNet establishes separate Web sites, or vertical portals—Walsh calls them "vortals"—for unglamorous industries like poultry processing and waste management. He has fifty-six of these sites, gathered in twelve business sectors, or silos, and each site provides storefronts for manufacturers and brings together buyers and suppliers. The site is an exchange, a marketplace, a general store with a stove to warm the backs of the waste-management heavies as they schmooze—among other things, he wants to eliminate the executives' date on the golf course and the three-day Vegas trade show. His Web sites will offer a perpetual trade show; in order to hear about new products and meet people, you won't have to leave your duck farm in East Moriches, Long Island. As Walsh talks I sense that he might be more than a little contemptuous of the businesses themselves—that is, he appears amused by the contrast between the homely nature of poultry-processing firms and the amazingly clever, odorless thing he is going to do for them.

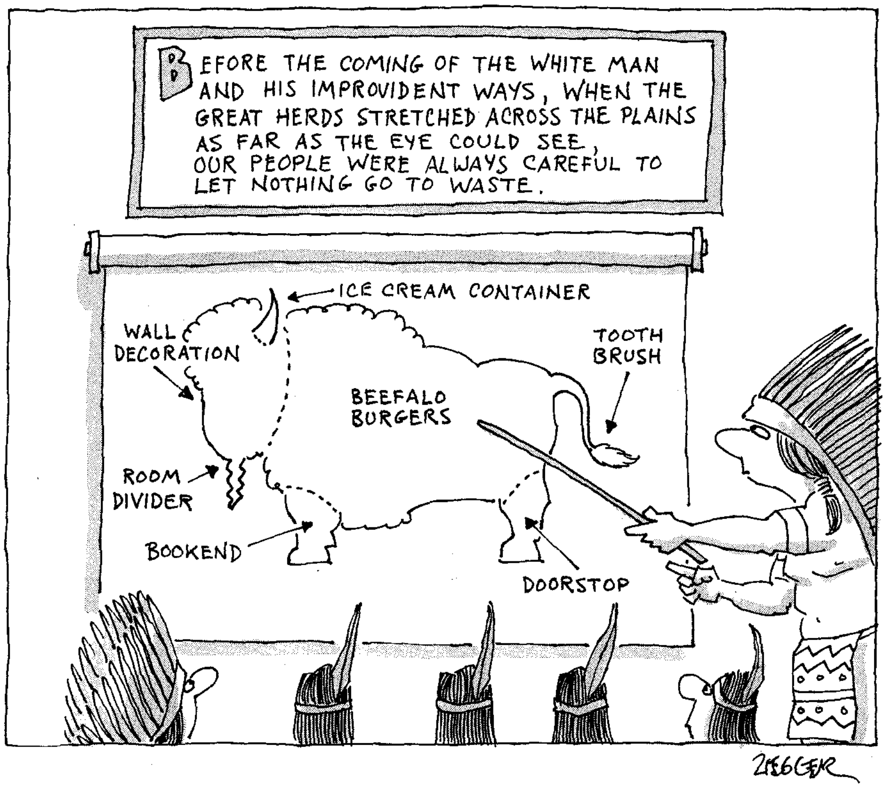
He tells us that stock in his company, which went public roughly a year ago, at sixteen dollars a share, has climbed to a split-adjusted price of four hundred and ninety dollars a share. He insists that even though VerticalNet has "a history of losses," the company, with nine billion dollars in market capitalization, is undervalued. The whole point is market share, not profits—not now, at any rate. "If you knew in 1979 what you know now about the development of cable," he says, reaching the clincher, "wouldn't you have borrowed every dollar you could, mortgaged your house, maxed your credit cards in order to get into cable?"

So there it is—the lure, the dazzling prospect. Someday we will look back on *this* moment as the instant in which enormous wealth was generated by Mark Walsh. But is his vision a triumphant actuality or an instance of *tulpenwoerde*? He is seductive, provocative, expansive, soaring—"Bulgaria leaped to digital without copper wire," he tells us, and assures us that golf doesn't stand a chance in the Third World, which will jump into B2B platforms without the intermediate step of developing a time-wasting culture of business sociability. Yes, but what if the leaping Bulgarians prefer links to links? If sociability can be supplanted by a "vortal," then why are we all gathered together on Desbrosses Street? I have a moment of furious doubt. I realize that all entrepreneurs have to do what Walsh is doing—keep their own people fired up, sustain the stock price. His speech is standard heroic-entrepreneur stuff. But his panache is a little unnerving: How many such projections are as unverifiable as his?

2/14/00 IMCL +3¾

The *Journal* rather airily classes Walsh's company as a "concept stock." This does not have a good sound. But I am aroused by his talk, by the deep appeal it makes to ambition and hope. Over the past six months, my wife and I have increased the percentage of our holdings in equities. We have mainly invested in funds, but we have also bought some individual information-technology stocks, all market leaders. Goodbye, diversification. The 401(k) money, all of it, is now invested in a fund that draws heavily on large-cap Nasdaq stocks; we have sold some of our bonds, liquidated life insurance, dropped value funds that are going nowhere, taken a home-equity loan, and built up our "exposure" to aggressive growth, technology, and biotech stocks. *Exposure*? We are naked. I have become that journalistic cliché the momentum investor, who piles onto a hot market sector, and on paper, at least, we are making serious money. We even have a runaway biotech stock, ImClone, which sat in our portfolio for years and suddenly took off last fall. But I tremble, for almost ninety per cent of our money is in stocks, and perhaps seventy-five per cent of that money is invested in the New Economy, and this is living dangerously indeed.

What is this thing called greed? Is it a withering, soul-destroying force, a canker eating away at one's innards and shredding one's relationships? This is what religious, political, and economic moralists have always said, particularly after the end of a boom or the collapse of a speculative bubble. But doesn't it make more sense to speak of greed as a silent, stealthy, unappeasable longing? The Internet changes everything, boosters say, and it may be changing the coloration of avarice. At the moment, greed is not just a desire for personal wealth but an eagerness to be part of a social organism growing at enormous speed. You are not just tapping a tree in order to catch the milky substance in a cup. You are taking part in a social transformation akin to that wrought by the printing press, the telephone, and the automobile. Cupidity, at the moment, is fired by hope and seared by risk. And, whatever its savagery, it partakes as well of the softer virtues. It is, after all, an exaggeration of a most respectable passion, the desire to expand, and the degradation of a lovely emotion, the pleasurable warmth of orderly increase—increase of children, land, goods, flocks, houses, even furniture. In the Old Testa-


BEFORE THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN AND HIS IMPROVIDENT WAYS, WHEN THE GREAT HERDS STRETCHED ACROSS THE PLAINS AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE, OUR PEOPLE WERE ALWAYS CAREFUL TO LET NOTHING GO TO WASTE.
ICE CREAM CONTAINER
WALL DECORATION
TOOTH BRUSH
BEEFALO BURGERS
ROOM DIVIDER
BOOKEND
DOORSTOP
ZIEGLER

ment, God rewards the righteous with many sheep, many blankets in the tent.

But any unappeasable longing can be turned to vanity and lies. That is certainly what Anthony Trollope was getting at in his great 1875 novel, "The Way We Live Now," which catches British society at a time when the big money made in the financial markets was changing the way people dealt with one another. At the center of "The Way We Live Now" is a nonexistent enterprise—the South Central Pacific and Mexican railway, which is supposed to run from Salt Lake City to Veracruz, two points between which it is hard to imagine many people wanting to travel.

Behind the scheme to float stock for this undertaking is one Augustus Melmotte, a shady financier, perhaps of French origin, around whom virtually all the other characters revolve. In order to give the scheme respectability, Melmotte enlists a variety of hard-up aristocrats to sit on a sham board. The great railway, thus solidified with Quality, is sold to the public, and the public gratefully bids up the shares, much to Melmotte's profit. Not a single piece of track is laid, but this doesn't prevent Melmotte from becoming the center of London society: around him, the spirit of merely claimed value is catching. In a mock version of the railroad swindle, the penniless swells on Melmotte's "board" take turns issuing worthless I.O.U.s to one another after all-night card games. People live on credit, on promises, or by committing frauds of one sort or another. They are forever propitiating, temporizing, cadging, forging, betraying. Trollope, I believe, was getting at a new kind of personality produced by the rapid shifts in capital—the man or woman who is morally promiscuous, whose character has the liquid properties of cash. Even sexual desire becomes speculative: a man may love a woman for a while, bid up her hopes, and then change her for another. Greed, the book suggests, inevitably dissolves social honor.

2/17/00 Greenspan addresses House Banking Committee

I watch Alan Greenspan make his semi-annual report on the state of the economy to the House Banking Committee. As he begins, I gaze at the little TV screen in my kitchen with adoration. I'm in love with Alan Greenspan—a partly bald, seventy-four-year-old Republican banker. He has been so effective, this man, so *good*, flooding the market with liquidity at just the right time, tightening at the right time. I admire his gravity, his civility, his realism, his springing step when he crosses the street in Washington, a slender briefcase held firmly under his left arm. So briskly he walks, his head down, brushing past the cameras—no way is he going to tip off the press to what he's thinking, not even with a glance. The economy, he says, is good; it's very good. Yet he is troubled. And he explicitly says that higher rates of productivity, of all things, are threatening to bring on inflation. He thinks people will expect greater corporate profits and will continue to invest, further heating up the market.

Such a worrier! Why does he have to make up a theory that almost no one believes in? Suddenly, I am furious, and I shout at the TV. He is aiming his remarks directly at my portfolio, making up reasons to bring it down. And yet I know his caution is morally beautiful; I know that in this hedonistic and frivolous republic it's as close to a tragic sense of life as anyone is likely to arrive at. Human felicity has its limits; there is always a reckoning, always a price. Oh, I fear his sorrow; I fear the burden of his pessimism. The bull, which was making me prosperous, had to be brought to its knees. My hero was going to slay me.

2/20/00 Market closed

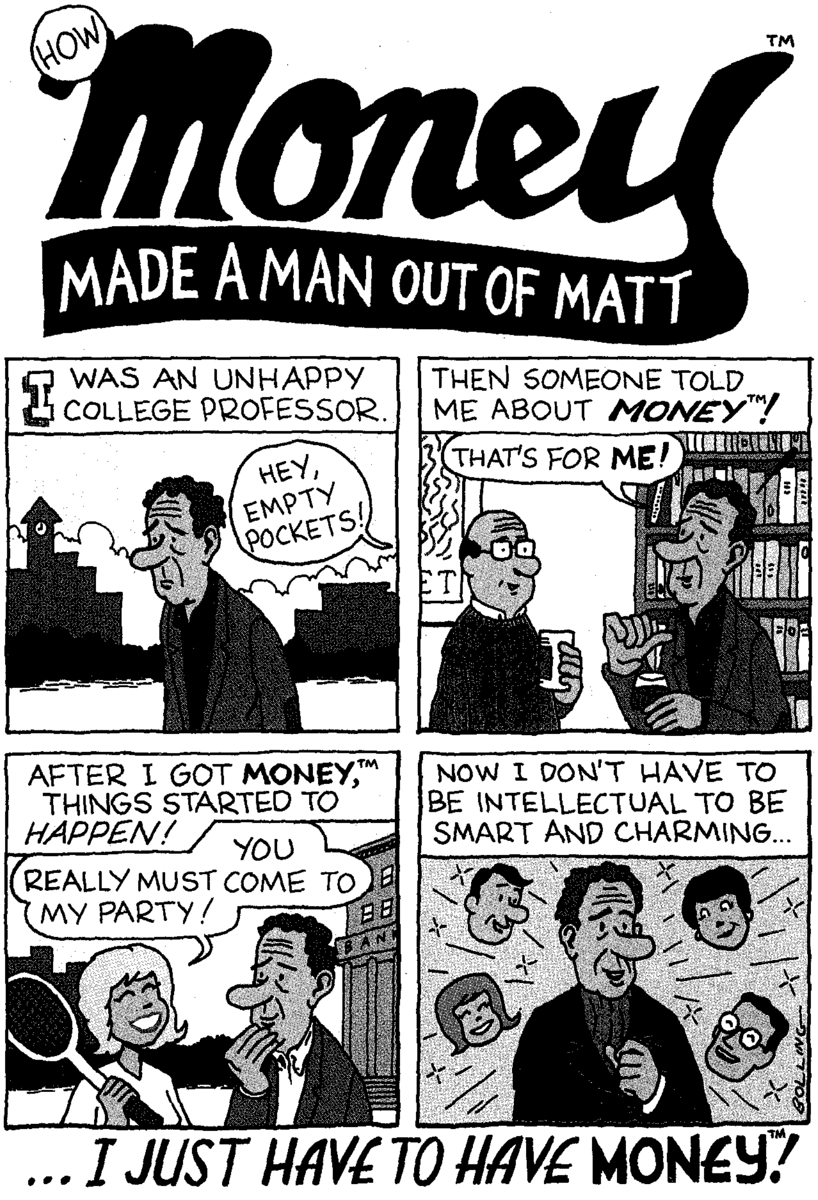
Sunday afternoon, and I'm sitting in the living room. Steam rises through the pipes, which issue dolorous groans and knocks. The cat wakes up and thwaps her tail, in syncopated rhythm with the pipes. Clang-*thwap*. . . clang-*thwap*. From my older son's room, silence. Is he taking a nap? I'm too zonked to check on him. All New York apartments can be judged by the hums they give off when they are still, and now that the radiator has calmed down I enjoy the hum of this apartment—a steady surf noise of traffic from West End Avenue, brightened by the sound of someone practicing the violin somewhere, a good Upper West Side duet. But the day passes slowly, very slowly. I leaf listlessly through the *Times* and watch the political shows without serious interest. It is life at low ebb. When I'm not working or talking to the kids, I can hardly wait for Monday.

On a given weekday morning, I will take up my station in front of the kitchen TV, at least for an hour or two, sometimes more, and watch the action unfold on CNBC. I have opened an on-line brokerage account at DLJdirect, and I gather research from such sites as Silicon Investor and TheStreet.com. The sites can be feverish and brilliant, a composite of knowledge, gossip, and rant. On The Underground Trader, a site for day traders, the slap-happy investors flick words at one another like pilots screaming in the middle of a dogfight. "Can you believe this?" "Die, baby, die!" "Next stop, 100. Crash and burn, baby!" The investment sites have become the nation's true unconscious, the locus of what it *wants*. The porno sites, by contrast, are square and boring—just pictures of people posing or doing whatever it is they are doing, over and over. After the first excitement fades, one longs for the thrill of an initial public offering. Freudians associate greed with the infant's unwillingness to give up the breast, followed by the savage memory of the breast's withdrawal. But, greedy as I am, I do not hesitate to withdraw breasts from my screen. The true turn-on is elsewhere.

Like all addictions, investment mania produces self-disgust and counter-obsessions (cooking? fitness? travel?) whose purpose, never fulfilled, is to free the prisoner from his cell. At the moment, the key is nowhere to be found, and as I sit and worry I have noticed, if I'm not mistaken, that my breath has got a little shorter, my gut a little heavier, and my sleep a little lighter. I go to the gym, get on the treadmill, and watch . . . CNBC.

2/28/00 Dow -12.99% for the year

I've been thinking about mad Nyquist, the day trader—that's John Nyquist, a former chemical engineer, and just the kind of guy who gives Alan Greenspan nightmares. As the *Journal* tells it, Nyquist chucked his job a few years ago and moved from Chicago with his wife, Kate, to a house on the edge of a golf course in South Carolina. He spent his mornings day-trading and his afternoons playing golf while Kate looked after her mother, who was dying. He told Kate that everything was fine, but one day last April, early in the morning, he lured her to the balcony of their bedroom to look at some birds—egrets and her-


HOW
MONEY™
MADE A MAN OUT OF MATT
I WAS AN UNHAPPY COLLEGE PROFESSOR.
HEY, EMPTY POCKETS!
THEN SOMEONE TOLD ME ABOUT MONEY™!
THAT'S FOR ME!
AFTER I GOT MONEY,™ THINGS STARTED TO HAPPEN!
YOU REALLY MUST COME TO MY PARTY!
BANK
NOW I DON'T HAVE TO BE INTELLECTUAL TO BE SMART AND CHARMING...
BOLLING
...I JUST HAVE TO HAVE MONEY!™

ons, he said—and when she leaned out he threw her from the balcony and then rushed down to finish her off. But at the last minute, with his hands around her throat, he fell back and blurted out, "I lost all our money." He had blown seven hundred and eighty thousand dollars in assets, including his wife's retirement account, which he raided by forging her signature. It is said that he wanted to collect on her life insurance to pay off his debts. But he couldn't go through with it, and he's in prison now, sentenced to five years on charges of assault and battery with intent to kill. Kate Nyquist recovered, and is trying to get on with her life.

This is a horror story. But it is also funny in its way, since Nyquist's mania is a rushed, farcical-tragical version of what so many of us are doing. Nyquist is our fool, our scapegoat, and when I read his story, at breakfast one morning, I laughed out loud. All that dread, all that dread that his act releases!

The component of his madness which strikes me the hardest is that he lied: he lied to his wife, who might have saved him, telling her that everything was O.K. even as he was squandering her funds. With Nyquist in mind, I fall on my knees before my ambition and make the obvious vows: I will not invest in derivatives or anything else I don't understand. I will not buy stocks on margin. I will not short-sell declining stocks, since that operation would take full-time vigilance. I will not become a day trader. I will not lie to anyone about what's going on. I will not lose myself.

I wonder how many of these promises I will have kept by the end of the year.

3/10/00 Henry Blodget speaks

People are eager to hear what Henry Blodget has to say, but he listens well, too, and over lunch at the Judson Grill, on a very hot day for the market, he leans across the table as I ask a question and stares at me intently, drawing his mouth down into a small, concentrated circle. Blodget analyzes the value of Internet stocks for Merrill Lynch, and he's good at what he does. His most renowned call came in December, 1998, when Amazon's stock was selling at two hundred and forty dollars a share, and he predicted, in the face of much skepticism, that it would go to four hundred dollars within a year, at which point the stock (adjusting for stock splits) shot to five hundred and fifty within a month. Though Blodget's been doing this kind of analysis as long as anyone else (since 1995, when Netscape became the first Internet stock to go public), he's only thirty-four, and blond, with high cheekbones and a long, handsome face.

I first met him nine days ago at an Internet conference, where he gave a keynote speech. Talk about Internet speed! Blodget took off like a shot and never came down to earth. His voice was dry but strong and clear, and he talked in bursts, which were outlined, in a PowerPoint presentation, on big screens to the left and the right of him.

There are now three hundred or so publicly traded Internet companies, and he told us right away that at least seventy-five per cent of them will disappear and never make money. Still, he said, "We believe the Internet stock phenomenon thus far is mostly rational." It's not a land boom, it's not the biotech bubble of 1991. Amazon's mere existence renders the entire Borders chain worth less. A "transfer of value" is going on, and prices are so high not because investors are irrational but because lots of capital is chasing a relatively small amount of shares. "The leading stocks are proxies for the growth of the Internet." If you don't invest in it, he said, moving his hands in parallel in front of his body, "you're not hedged against its impact on the rest of the economy." Each Internet stock may be overvalued, "but the Internet itself is undervalued." At some point, there will be a "rebalancing of supply and demand," and Internet stock values will

RUBEN BOLLING

move more in line with historical norms.

As Blodget leans over the table and talks to me at lunch, I decide that he is attempting to work as a stabilizing force in the midst of the maelstrom—a navigator who harnesses the wind without neglecting the tear in the mainsail or the spar swinging close to his head. It's been an amazing time for his sector—and for my investments, too. Yesterday, Thursday, March 9th, the Nasdaq index closed at 5,046.86 It has gone from 4,000 to 5,000 in just forty-eight trading days. In ten weeks, our portfolio as a whole has gone up twenty-five per cent; I am on track to meet my goal, though everything would have to continue to go right for the rest of the year for this to happen. Yet, despite high returns, I am more nervous than ever. On CNBC, the Stalwarts are talking to various gurus who warn of doom; rumors are hitting the press of startup Internet firms running out of cash. "Look," Blodget says, "you have to develop calluses. Some of these stocks are going to drop twenty or thirty per cent in a day." For safety, he recommends establishing a core holding of the market leaders—say, a hundred shares of Yahoo or A.O.L.—and buying more shares on the dips, and then selling a comparable number of shares as the price rises.

I have to ask: "Do you ever feel like a man riding a stallion to the edge of a cliff?"

"I feel like a man riding a stallion across an endless plain, and someday the horse will begin to slow," he says.

3/15/00 Nas -124.01

All day, there has been a rising pressure in my esophagus, as if a Spalding were being driven up a garden hose. I have to calm myself. This quarter, the Nasdaq has been swinging up and down by a hundred or more points a day, and I'm following it too closely and banging my head on the kitchen counter. Now and then, in a fit of despair, I throw myself at a book of poetry or a long essay or a classic novel, but apart from the Trollope and a new enthusiasm, "The Financier," by Theodore Dreiser, whose capitalist hero Frank Cowperwood possesses all the qualities of coolness that I lack, I can't stay focussed on anything. My concentration breaks, and I start calculating multiples in my head. It is the investor's disease. If I now have eighty-seven cents invested in fund X, how much will I have at the end of the year if it continues to grow at the same rate? I'm making myself rich in fantasy by doing fourth-grade math exercises.

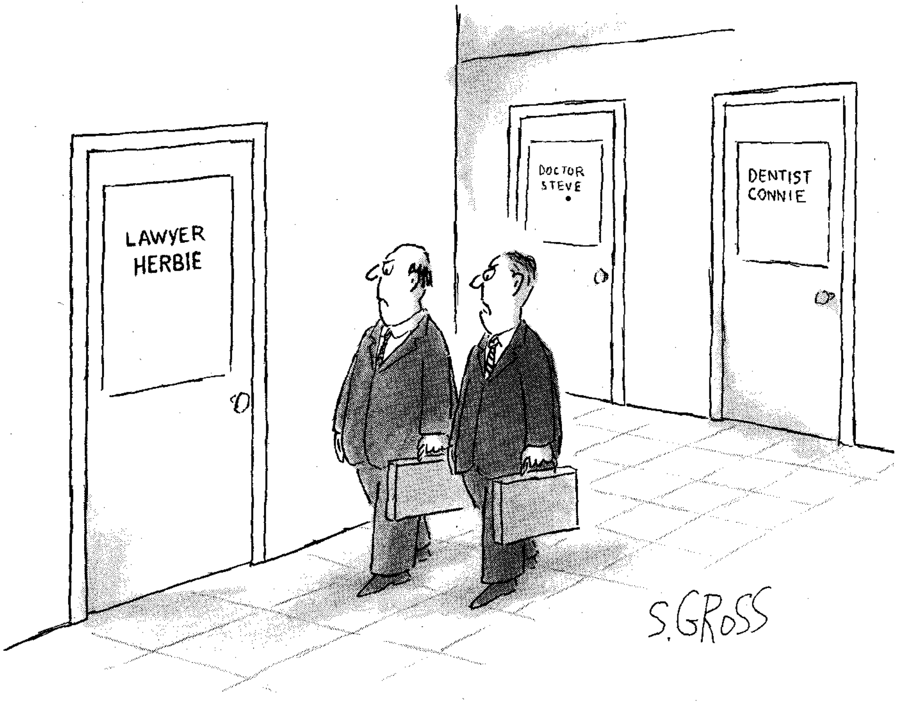
There is no way out of this; one can only go *through* it. At the end is success or trouble. The thing that I want to hold on to by making a million dollars is my apartment—the apartment that offers a nice distillation of Upper West Side hum. My marriage is breaking up—it has been for more than a year—and I don't want to leave my home. There's nothing special about the apartment, but I'm used to it. Since my wife and I are amicably dividing everything down the middle, I must give her financial assets equal to the market value of the apartment if I am to hold on to it. That's a lot of money: the boom has *windhandeled* up the value of my neighborhood. Selling the place (it's a co-op), splitting the take, and buying two smaller apartments would make infinitely more sense, but, as the man said, I would prefer not to. I know the price of my preference. What started out for me as a practical and emotional need has transformed itself into greed, pure and simple.

3/31/00 Nas +12.3% for the quarter

A vicious, frightening final week in the quarter. Earlier in the year, the Nasdaq dipped and came back three times, and this week another correction got under way—a nauseating drop of seven hundred points in a few days, then a partial recovery, starting around three o'clock yesterday, Thursday, March 30th, and continuing today. Still, the index was off 7.9 per cent for the week, and some of the drops were extreme. For instance, VerticalNet's share price dropped fifteen dollars today alone.

I am exhausted, drained, disappointed. For the quarter, our portfolio went up about seventeen per cent, which would be a fine return at any time, though the gains have fallen considerably from the high point on March 10th, when I had lunch with Henry Blodget. I will have to be awfully lucky to come even within sight of the goalpost.

As the Nasdaq collapsed this week, and the second- and third-tier New Economy stocks plunged, the scolds and moralizers came out of their corners hurling dead tulips. Their message: The speculative boom is over. Investors will buy only those New Economy companies that show solid profit. Well, maybe. The gross domestic product increased for the last quarter of 1999 by a fantastic 7.3 per cent. Trying to slow the economy down, Alan Greenspan will raise interest rates again in May, but the American people are flush, and Greenspan can't stop them from investing.



"I suppose we have Judge Judy to thank for all this."

TIME

There was too much, always, then too little.
Childhood: sickness.
By the side of the bed I had a little bell—
at the other end of the bell, my mother.

Sickness, gray rain. The dogs slept through it. They slept on the bed,
at the end of it, and it seemed to me they understood
about childhood: best to remain unconscious.

The rain made gray slats on the windows.
I sat with my book, the little bell beside me.
Without hearing a voice, I apprenticed myself to a voice.
Without seeing any sign of the spirit, I determined
to live in the spirit.

The rain faded in and out.
Month after month, in the space of a day.
Things became dreams; dreams became things.

Then I was well; the bell went back to the cupboard.
The rain ended. The dogs stood at the door,
panting to go outside.

I was well, then I was an adult.
And time went on—it was like the rain,
so much, so much, as though it was a weight that couldn't be moved.

I was a child, half sleeping.
I was sick; I was protected.
And I lived in the world of the spirit,
the world of the gray rain,
the lost, the remembered.

Then suddenly the sun was shining.
And time went on, even when there was almost none left.
And the perceived became the remembered,
the remembered, the perceived.

—*Louise Glück*

Still, something has snapped. My friend Craig Rumford, the investment banker, says that the inevitable period of shakeout that Henry Blodget spoke of is already upon us. Craig has jumped the fence after all. He still specializes in mergers and acquisitions, but he has left his distinguished firm and joined an on-line investment bank. I visit him at his new digs. For him, it is a good moment: many of the small New Economy companies will join together or swallow one another up. In "The Financier," the ten-year-old Frank Cowperwood decides to go into banking after watching a lobster devour a squid in a fish market. "Things lived on each other—that was it," he concludes. The New Economy has spawned plenty of lobsters and even more squid, and Rumford the consolidator is happy, back in the game again, though his clothes are all wrong: "Can't use any of the shirts with French cuffs. All the suits are going to the far end of my son's closet." In line with New Economy manners, the sartorial style at his new firm tends toward a polo shirt and slacks—with a Brioni jacket. We may remember the Brioni jacket as the flourish of a historical juncture: the time of the Great Consolidation.

4/7/00 Nas + 9.27% for the year

In the wake of the Microsoft anti-trust decision, a plunge in the Nasdaq index, a shudder, another enormous plunge, followed, the same day, by an enormous recovery. On Tuesday, April 4th, I was talking to a friend on the telephone at around one-fifteen and the index was down 575 points. "It's a crash," we agreed solemnly. What else could you call it? I hung up, went to a doctor's appointment, returned a little more than an hour later, and stood in the kitchen blinking at the screen. The Nasdaq had come back about 400 points. Still, three-quarters of our gains for the year were wiped out. On paper—or, if you like, onscreen—we had lost around two hundred thousand dollars in the past two weeks, but after the first shock I didn't feel a thing; that is, the initial chagrin gave way to a weirdly disembodied sensation, as if this were happening to someone else. A few hours after that, this feeling, which I interpret as helplessness—we're all fools, no one can control or predict the market, etc.—gave way to scorn. Why the panic selling? I repeat the mantras: The means are in place to transform this society through new technology. Nothing has changed. I have not sold, will not sell, and will wait for the recovery—which begins, as it happens, by the end of the week. On the telephone, Henry Blodget says, "That dip was a violent reminder that the stock market is not a savings account that just happens to be earning forty-per-cent interest a year." Yet he also predicts that in three to five years New Economy stocks, which are now worth about a trillion dollars, or five per cent of the American capital markets, will go to two or three trillion dollars, or ten to fifteen per cent. Earnings will continue to lag, but this does not sound like a bad place to invest.

Yet there is no safety for me or for anyone else. With my welfare in mind, a friend tells a curiously self-punishing story. His clever older brother called him in the early fall and tipped him off to a pharmaceutical stock called LeukoSite. The price was seven dollars. My friend bought the stock, and, after a few months, when he noticed that the stock had more than tripled, he sold it and made a nice profit. Several weeks ago, his brother called again. "You haven't sold LeukoSite, have you?" My friend allowed that he had. A dead silence followed. LeukoSite had been taken over by Millennium Pharmaceuticals, and the stock was then worth three hundred dollars a share. If my friend had held on and sold at the peak, he would have made about a million dollars. There it is: the million, not *my* million, but, still, a million, and it's unreachable.

My friend showed neither weakness nor poor judgment by selling when he did. Regret over his loss would be absurd at any time except at this incredible moment, in which multiples of forty, in a period of seven months, do occur now and then. So he did feel regret, even chagrin, though his sorrow over the lost money was mixed with something else—relief that his whole life was not tied up in investment. He had a good job; he had friends, people who depended on him. He had a life. What he meant to convey, I think, by telling me *his* primal story, was that an obsession with money is disfiguring. The game is good; it's never been better, anywhere. But, still, my friend was telling me that one has to breathe. Greed is not in itself a shameful feeling—there are those tents in the Old Testament lands, and the patriarchs taking satisfaction in the large flocks of sheep gathered outside—but one has to live apart from greed. And even I have to breathe, one minute after another, one day after another. I have to slow down and breathe.

4/10/00 WEBM 189

I go to the annual literary gala thrown by the PEN American Center in support of writers who are political prisoners. Listening to the speakers, I am relieved to be there, relieved not to think of the market, for the Nasdaq is again collapsing. The market will create me; the market will also betray me.

But there is a man at my table. A reporter, he says. He covers the tech sector. I have to ask. "WebMethods," he says. It provides infrastructure software to help companies connect to one another over the Internet. It's down from its highs, but it's solid. Or so he says. As the speeches go on, I borrow a pen and jot its stock ticker symbol—WEBM—on the back of my program. Before long, today or maybe tomorrow, I will check it out. ♦

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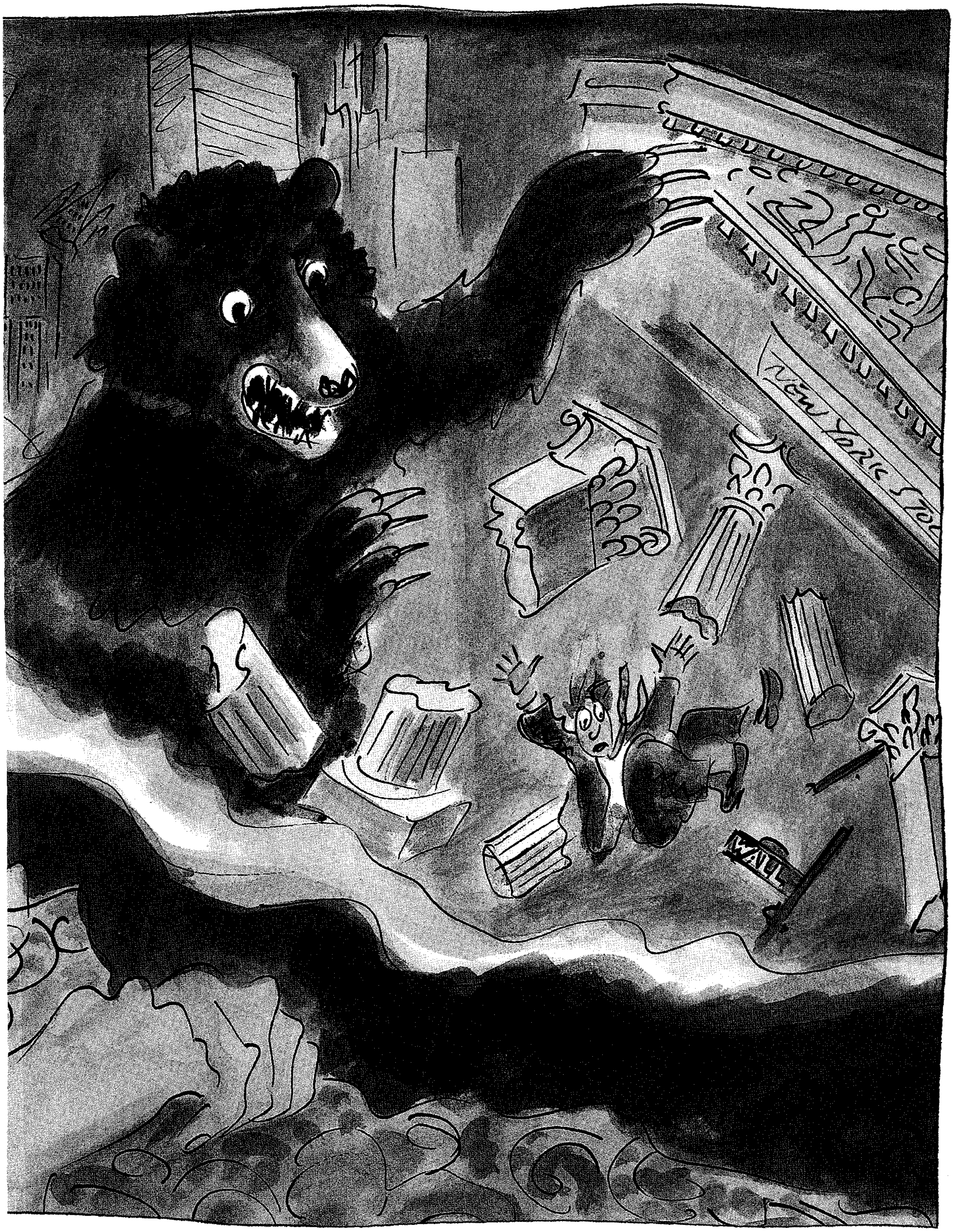

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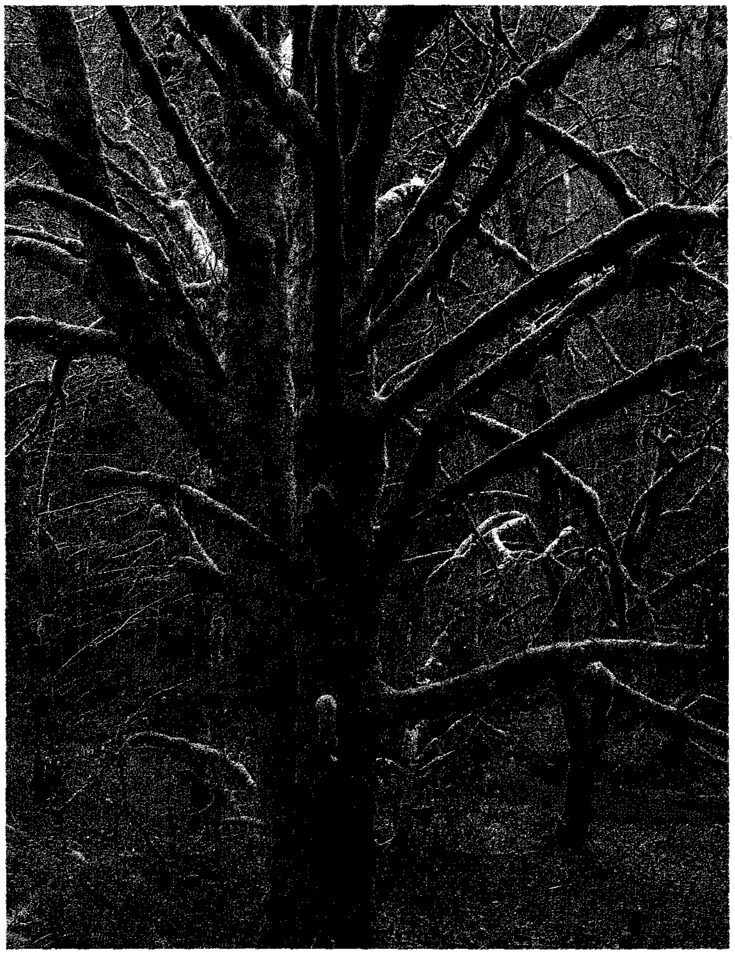


WILLIAM NEILL, "MOSS-COVERED MAPLE TREES" (1993)

The policeman's boots had more eyelets than could be counted easily, and all the people in the Road House—the cook, the bartender, the waiter, the cabaret-style singer, the customers—waited on his words.

"We're looking for a retired chemist," the policeman said. "His daughter picked him up at his apartment early this afternoon. She then dropped him off at the Small Art Cinema. Then she came back to get him, this being after the movie, and he was gone."

The Small Art Cinema stood between the Road House and a Ferrari dealership. Everything else out here was pine forest, deer warnings, little bridges, and sand by the side of the road.

"What's he wearing?" asked Keith Lyon, the cook, who lived alone in the nearby town of Ventura. He came from an old Ventura family and sometimes he felt a touch mystified at how he spent his days—at having arrived in his forties with no genuine purpose, beyond cooking, day after day, full plates going out, empty plates coming back. It was as if a joke had been played on his life, though he could see the humor of it and it hadn't made him bitter.

The policeman shifted from boot to boot, seeming to resist the question just because someone had asked it. Yet he told them what the old man was wearing.

"He is seventy-seven years old," he continued, "with a scar above his mouth, in the shape of a shell, from skin cancer."

Stella Brand closed the lid of the piano and stepped down from the riser where she played and sang Thursday through Sunday evenings. She wore a black dress and her hair fell down her back in a striking shade, too red to be natural. It was adorned with tortoiseshell clips that looked like prehistoric shore animals.

"He hasn't been in here," she said. "And I notice people when I'm playing. I remember everything about them."

"We know he's not here," the policeman said. "We think he's in the state forest. Chances are, that's where he is."

"He could get lost so fast," Stella said.

"Not necessarily," the policeman said. "He and his daughter once climbed Cobble Mountain, so we just don't know. In any case, I'm asking for volunteers to work in teams of two. You will go out, you will stay on the trail to which you're assigned, you will come back. Under no circumstances will you lose sight of your partner."

"Maybe he got bored with the movie and caught a ride home with someone," said a customer who was a guard at the local museum. "I might do that."

"What you might do is beside the point," said the policeman. "As you're not missing."

Keith Lyon and Stella Brand entered the forest on the far side of the car dealership. They walked the downhill path for a while, calling for the missing man, and crossed a small stream, four feet wide and clogged with leaves. The mud beneath the leaves pulled at their shoes, and they held their arms out as if they were carrying suitcases.

"It's weird to see a cop indoors," Stella said.

"Why?"

"The gun, the club, the handcuffs, the radio . . . You feel like saying, 'Get outside with all that stuff.' "

"They take up too much space."

"Yeah. So I wonder what happened to this guy."

"Maybe he's having a drink somewhere."

"A brandy."

"Possibly."

"In one of those glasses," said Stella.

"A snifter."

"But would he do that to his daughter?"

"He could have forgotten he was supposed to meet her."

"You'd have to be extremely forgetful to forget your own daughter," Stella said. "This mud is insane."

She bent down and picked up a stick with which to gouge out the deeply indented soles of her boots. She wore low-heeled black pumps at the piano and leather forest-green boots everywhere else. The tasselled hem of her dress hung beneath her blue coat with toggle buttons.

"Then where is he?" Keith asked.

She dug at her boots and then pointed the stick off into the trees. "In here. Maybe a hundred yards from us."

Keith called for Mr. Geer, which was the man's name. "But either way, he still forgot her."

"We're only speculating," said Stella. This was her way to end a disagreement—by dropping the subject and remarking on the dynamics of the discussion. "You don't like what I'm saying," she would say. "We're talking in circles." "This is getting us nowhere."

A while back, Stella and Keith had gone on two dates, but they had not had a great time on either one. The first time, miniature golf had made them feel like fakers. They had wanted so much more from each other than could be expressed by knocking a ball through the turning blades of a windmill. And on the second date Keith got so drunk that he repeatedly asked her the same questions about her life, and what had brought her to Ventura, as if he weren't listening to her answers. And later, walking her home, he became sullen and fell off a curb. He still felt bad about how he had acted that night. It was one of several incidents that had led to his giving up drinking.

And in fact he had been listening. She had gone to music school in Delaware, she'd told him. She had toured with a combo until complex jealousies between the band members had made the music suffer. The owner of the Road House had happened on her while she was playing for hat money in a hotel in Albany.

They were on the sort of ever-descending path that you keep thinking is about to reach bottom and start climbing. But eventually they got used to walking downhill and to the turns of the trail and lost track of that feeling of descent. It seemed instead that the light was rising away from them. The difference was subtle but evident.

Then they came to a downed tree so mature that they could not step over it, but had to sit on it and swing their legs across. They rested and took turns calling for Mr. Geer. They hit a rhythm, as if they were performing in a musical. Once Keith called out "Mr. Clean." It was not funny that the man was lost, but it seemed funny to be yelling for him down in this particular place when he might be anywhere at all. They didn't laugh, they just smiled, and then they stopped smiling. It was late fall and dark in the forest.

Stella looked at the map they'd been given. "I'll tell you one thing. I am not going to like getting old."

"Why worry about it?"

"Well, this is men, and this is women, isn't it?"

"My aunt is happy."

"And what does she do?"

"Works in a doll shop."

"I mean to express her happiness."

"I don't know. Just the way she carries herself."

"Oh, great. I can't wait to carry myself. What will I be, in pieces? But, really, Keith, think of it, for men or women. It's lonely. It's got to be. Your friends die. And there you are. It's like it's looking for you."

"What is?"

"Death, man! And it hurts. Physically it hurts, and mentally. Because don't you think you'd be thinking of all the things you ever wanted to do and never did? Even for us, now, we might say, we might delude ourselves that, well, I'm not young, but I can still do these things that I care about. But finally you must know that, I'm sorry, time's up, there won't be any more."

"You paint a morbid picture."

"I know it." Stella folded the map. "But we have to think of these things."

"What does a chemist do, anyway?" asked Keith.

They had left the assigned trail because it was depressing and were now going up a steeper and more open path that had split off from the first one. Young trees grew on either side, looking spindly and defenseless, although, Keith reasoned, they must not be; it was only that their defenses were not obvious to the eye.

"Tons of paperwork," said Stella. "And you're always having to go to a storeroom to sign things out. Probably the time you spend in the actual pouring of liquids and heating them up is very small."

"But, I mean, the goal of it."

"Mr. Geer!" Stella said.

"Mr. Geer! Because, whatever they need to find out, you would think, they already have found out. At this point in the history of chemistry."

"Well, I don't know," Stella said. "To make better substances. For, oh, airplanes. To make them lighter and more flexible. Would be one example."

At the top of the ridge, they found an ancient and untended orchard. The trees were wiry, hobbled, and suffocated by vines, but they had been planted in rows and at intervals, according to some plan. Bare branches reached for the ground as if to retrieve the apples they had dropped.

Keith climbed a tree until he ran out of limbs that would support him. He was fifteen or twenty feet in the air. He could see the edges of the orchard where it met the hillside. He could see a shack to the north—or was it east? He was not good with directions.

"What's out there?" Stella asked.

"A building."

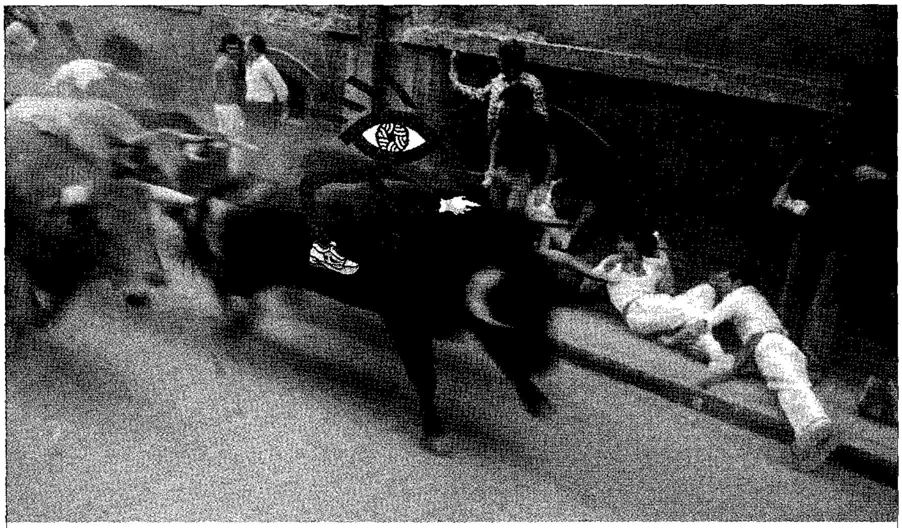
He climbed back down and they walked on hard round apples through the rows of trees. The sun moved slowly down the sky. When they reached the gray slant-roof shack, Stella looked in the windows.

"Anybody home?" Keith asked.

"I can't tell."

Dust clouded the windows. But the door was not locked. Inside there were gap-tooth rakes, an old table with numbers scrawled on the surface, and a life-size wooden likeness of a man with an apple for a head. They brushed cobwebs from the statue, took it by the shoulders, tipped it back to gauge its weight. It had been painted, but the colors were faded now—the blue of the overalls, the green of the shirt, and the red of the apple were all converging on a mossy shade.

"It's not him," Stella said. "But it's something."



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"What do you think?"

"You got me."

"It's an icon."

"They should have given it eyes and a mouth."

"Then it wouldn't be an apple."

"But it would be friendlier. This is ominous. It says, 'Disturb me, and something will happen.' "

"Did we disturb it?"

"We moved it."

"How disturbing is that?"

"It doesn't disturb me. But I haven't been standing here for a hundred years waiting."

They went outside and stood on the matted grass in front of the cabin.

"Mr. Geer, Mr. Geer, come out!" Keith yelled.

"Did you see someone?"

"No. But this is where I would be."

"This is where you are."

"I just have a feeling that maybe he came by this way. Say he worked here summers, when he was young, and this was a working orchard."

"When he was in chemistry school," Stella joined in. "In the fifties. The forties."

"Some year. Yes."

"And always in the sun," Stella said. "So that, down the road, he might get skin cancer."

"That's right. And possibly he had a crush on someone. Everyone gets crushes when they're working summer jobs. And you remember the people you had crushes on fondly, because you never hear from them again. So he just wanted to see the old place. To remember how it was."

Stella pressed the back of her wrist to her forehead, as if she were about to faint. "And the young woman," she said. "Who carried the bushel baskets."

"Can't you see it?"

"Why wouldn't his daughter know this? Why didn't she say, 'Look in the orchard. He likes it there'?"

"Maybe it was private. Maybe he hadn't thought of it in a long time. He comes out of the movie, he's got a few minutes, and he thinks, Hey, isn't this the way to that orchard?"

They cupped their hands around their mouths and yelled as loudly as they could for Mr. Geer.

And then they heard the three notes of the siren, far off. This was the signal to stop searching and come back because the old man had been found. The sound settled in the trees.

"So much for that idea," Stella said.

"I was sure we'd find him."

"The main thing is if he's O.K."

They went back the way they had come. It didn't take as long, but it never does, going back, and the lights were on at the Ferrari place when they came out of the trees. They stood for a moment admiring the red Modena in the showroom.

Mr. Geer was sitting in a booth at the Road House when Keith and Stella arrived. The bartender had made him a steak sandwich with onions and fries. He ate without hurry, stopping now and again to look around at the crowd of pseudo rescuers who stood at an uneasy distance. The old man had eyes of flint and upswept silver hair. His mouth turned down at the corners naturally, so it was hard to guess his mood. His daughter was said to be on her way from the police station in Ventura. They had all imagined him dead or desperate, and here he was, eating a steak sandwich.

"He showed up back at the theatre," said Kenneth Small, who ran the Small Art Cinema.

"Where'd he been?" Keith asked.

"Not clear. I think he got turned around on the loop trail and was too self-conscious to call for help."

"Didn't need help," Mr. Geer said. "Never doubted where I was. But where is Susie?"

"She's coming," said Kenneth Small, adding, for Keith's benefit, "That's his daughter."

"Little did I know that leaving a movie would mobilize the community," Mr. Geer said. "You can all go back to what you were doing."

"Did you go to an orchard, Mr. Geer?" asked Keith.

"Are you a ranger?"

"No. I'm a chef."

" 'Along the solitary plain we walked / Like one who seeks the road that he has lost, / And, till he finds it, seems to walk in vain,' " Mr. Geer said.

"You're not answering me."

"Not really."

"Then it's a mystery," Keith said as he tied his apron behind his back. He felt good, like having a little celebration. A drink came to mind, and then floated out. He began laying out the long-handled pans for the supper special. He would be dealing with eggplant, easy to mess up, but he'd do it right. And maybe Stella would take another gamble on his company. Anything seemed possible with the night beginning and the missing man found. Keith remembered what Stella had said on the dark trail, the heat in her voice as she talked about death and all the things they had ever wanted to do.

As for Stella, she changed her shoes and slid into her place at the piano. She played "I Think It's Going to Rain Today," and sang to no one in particular, in a soft and jazzy voice. She pressed the keys and released them reluctantly. It was a standard song of hers, and Keith had heard it enough now that it no longer made him think of rain. ♦

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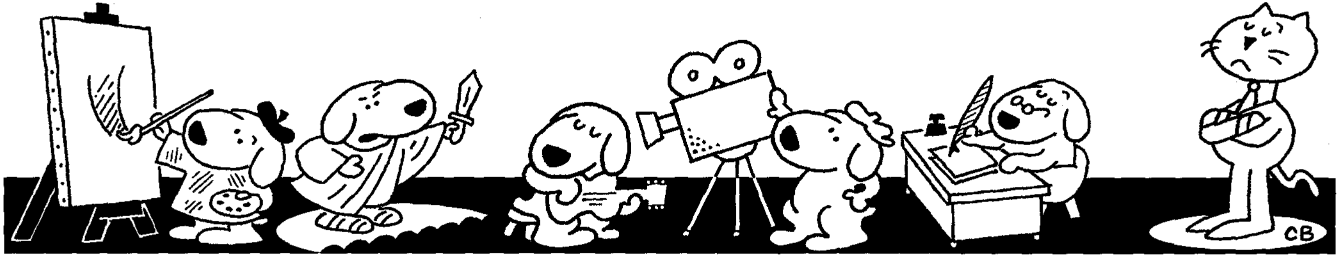


BOOKS

SCHMATTE HARI

The secret of Judith Krantz.

BY JUDITH SHULEVITZ

To read a Judith Krantz novel is to find yourself in the presence of a woman who could have had a hell of a career in retail. Take "Scruples" (1978), the first of ten best-selling tales of sex, money, and the manufacture of female glamour through high fashion and the media. Billy Winthrop is an unhappy fat girl who blossoms into a stylish, slender secretary and marries, for love, Ellis Ikehorn, an exceedingly wealthy businessman nearly forty years her senior, who promptly dies, leaving her with the classic dilemma of the young widow in the romantic novel: What to do with the money? Billy's answer is to open an enormous boutique on Beverly Hills' Rodeo Drive. Lest readers sneer at this middle-class ambition, Krantz makes it clear that the store, Scruples, is not an amateurish collection of overpriced schmattes. It is destined to become, in the pileup of superlatives which distinguishes her style, "the most successful luxury shop in the world, a brilliant combination of boutique, gift shop, the world's best ready-to-wear and haute couture."

But things don't go that well at first. After a few months in which the curious come and buy, Scruples begins to lose alarming sums of money. For some reason, the store's "twenty-five shades of supremely subtle gray," not to mention its "terrifying herd of chic, elderly, haughty saleswomen who all act as if they would far rather speak French than English," fail to entice. *Women's Wear Daily* calls it "Billy's Folly." Then, in one of the more suspenseful chapters Krantz has written, Billy meets Spider Elliott, a handsome young fashion photographer and ladies' man with zero marketing experience, who insists that he can save her store. She is dubious, but desperate. He looks the place over, offers a few elliptical remarks ("Retailing isn't just stock. Retailing is romance. Retailing is mystery"), and disappears to spend two weeks grilling his six sisters on their fashion needs and desires. Just as Billy is about to sell the store, he presents her with his findings:

> "Shopping has become a form of entertainment, Billy, whether you like it or not. A visit to Scruples *is just not fun* and your potential customers demand fun from the stores they visit. You can even go all the way and call it the Disneyland concept of retailing."
>
> "Disneyland!" Billy said it in a low, horrified, repelled voice.

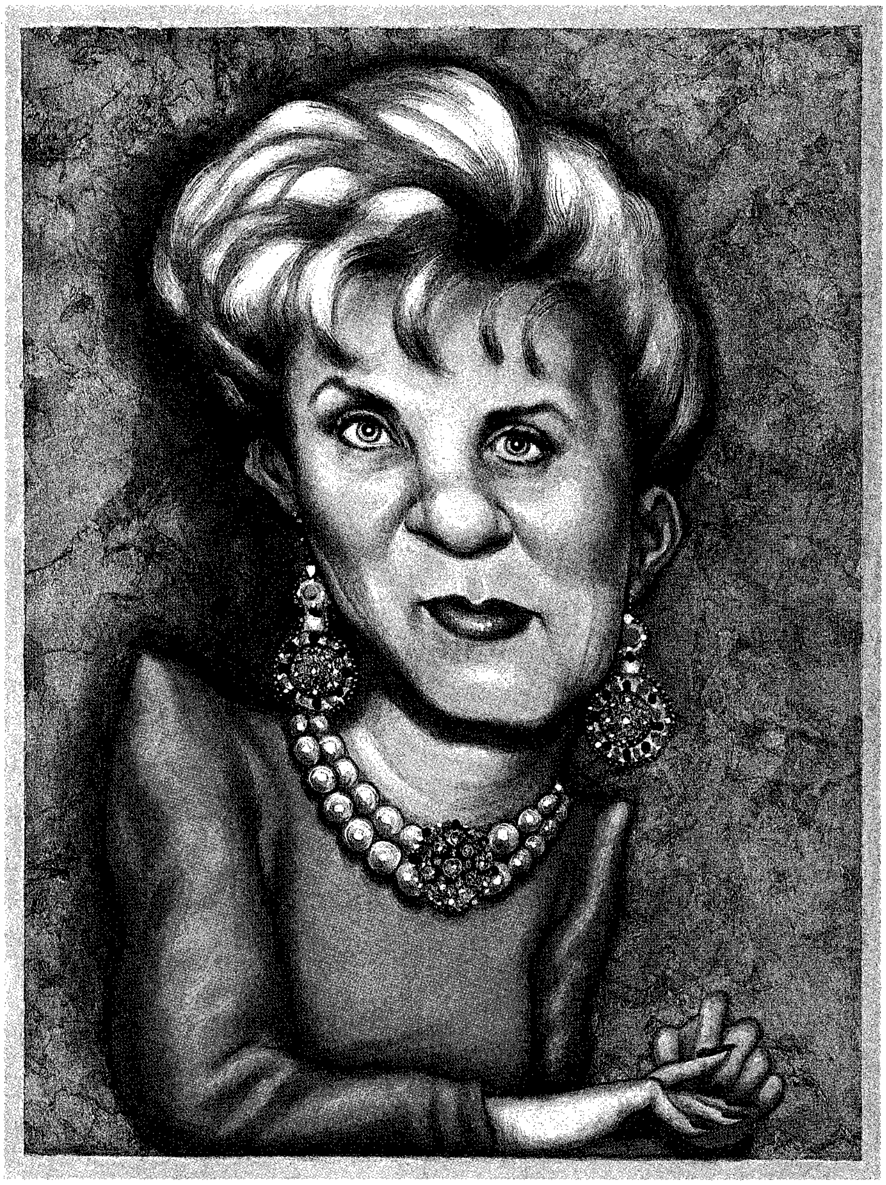
Here we have the secret ingredient of Krantz's novels: her business models could actually succeed in the real world. Spider might be an early incarnation of Michael Wolf, the Booz, Allen & Hamilton marketing consultant who has, in fact, advised Disney. Part of Spider's wisdom is just an intuitive grasp of the psychology of shopping, but he also senses the spirit of the self-involved seventies. He turns the ground floor of Scruples into an overstuffed gift store that advances a pre-Martha Stewart vision of shabby country chic. He adds a pub and game room in back for bored husbands and "an Edwardian winter garden" café for their wives, and relegates the couture upstairs, while models stroll around and chat with the customers. As for the dressing rooms, Spider writes to Billy's decorator, "Please unleash all your fantasies. . . . Each individual fitting room will have its particular admirers, whether you choose to do it as a villa in Portofino or as a Moroccan seraglio or even as a Queen Anne boudoir in Kent." The renovation soon turns Scruples into the most delightful place to blow cash in Los Angeles, especially if you are rich enough to have Spider serve as your personal shopper and afternoon sex partner.

Touches of commercial savvy like this give Krantz the edge over her competition—Jacqueline Susann and Sidney Sheldon and all the other practitioners of the so-called sex-and-shopping genre. That's a catchy but deceptively broad term: Susann wrote morality plays about fame and its vicissitudes; Sheldon writes gothic narrative against a fuzzy backdrop of celebrity and high-stakes finance. Krantz's novels read like Harvard Business School case studies on the retail experience, filtered through gauzy, if sexually explicit, Harlequin-style romance. Her heroines may have flawless looks and noble lineage and dream forever of their first, lost loves—or at least the men who gave them their first orgasms—but their deepest aspiration is to make it as small-business owners. Billy's happiness, and, later, that of her stepdaughter, Gigi, is tied to the financial well-being of her store. Daisy Valensky, the tragically bankrupted daughter of a Russian prince and an American movie star, who is the protagonist of "Princess Daisy" (1980), is never more fulfilled than when she's working as one of the most competent production managers that the television-commercial industry has ever seen. The beautiful Maggy Lunel, one of three heroines of "Mistral's Daughter" (1982), eventually finds security and peace of mind as the businesslike head of her own extremely lucrative modelling agency.

Where did Krantz pick up this stuff? We can deduce from her disarmingly titled memoir, "Sex and Shopping: The Confessions of a Nice Jewish Girl" (St. Martin's; $25.95), that she learned it at home. Her marketing instincts come from her father, Jack Tarcher, who as the head of an advertising agency gave his daughter a job designing a campaign for a new line of Coty lipstick when she was a teen-ager. (Young Judy hated the work, but the ads were good enough to be used.) Her fashion sense derived from her mother, Mickey Brager. Both parents were children of immigrants; both were radically self-invented. Jack, whose Russian father raised chickens in New Jersey, dropped out of high school and opened his agency at the age of twenty-four. Mickey was brought over from Lithuania when she was four and grew up in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. She left school at fourteen to support her family by working in a factory, and by sixteen she was qualified as a bookkeeper. From that point on, her story is strictly Krantzian: "Brilliant, hard-working, indomitable Mickey Brager had huge ambition and she moved, without losing a single day's pay, to half a dozen jobs in the course of the next seven years, eventually earning the sum, amazingly large for 1924, of forty dollars a week."

Mickey lived with Jack for a year before they married, a daring thing to do in the twenties, then went back to school, earned a baccalaureate degree, a master's degree in economics, and a law degree, and spent the rest of her working life with the Legal Aid Society. She was also a co-founder of New York's Liberal Party. But, notwithstanding her devotion to social causes, Mickey was unabashedly fashionable. And, by the time Judy was ready for elementary school, she, her parents, and her younger sister and brother had moved from Greenwich Village to a designer-decorated apartment on Central Park West.

Judy's childhood was idyllic—she was taken to the ballet, the planetarium, art museums, the World's Fair of 1939—but she felt emotionally stunted by her father's remoteness and the intensity of her mother's attention, which she describes as critical and tyrannical. Mickey's greatest contribution to her daughter's character wasn't her interest in politics, which Judy never shared; it was forcing her children to wear cheap clothes to their fancy school (she didn't want them to take their wealth for granted)—an injustice that guaranteed Judy's commitment to the art of self-presentation. twenty-seven pairs of kid gloves. Her husband told her that he knew she'd make a good novelist because of "how much I appreciated and understood the essence of a particular pleasure"—he was remembering, she says, how her face was transfixed with delight after she bought some much-coveted Gucci bags on their honeymoon. She writes, "I've lived, for fifty years, in the background of what eventually came to be known as 'a Judith Krantz novel.' . . . What many in the publishing business and many interviewers suspiciously consider to be a shrewd commercial move on my part is simply following that oldest of adages, 'write about what you know.'"


ANITA KUNZ

Touches of commercial savvy give Krantz the edge over Jacqueline Susann and Sidney Sheldon and all the other practitioners of the "sex and shopping" genre.

Krantz has wrung several careers out of her hard-won elegance. She didn't publish "Scruples" until she was fifty, and before that she was a fashion publicist in Paris, a *Good Housekeeping* accessories editor, a women's-magazine writer, the wife of a Hollywood producer, and, at one point when she was expecting her first son (she has two), the purchaser of

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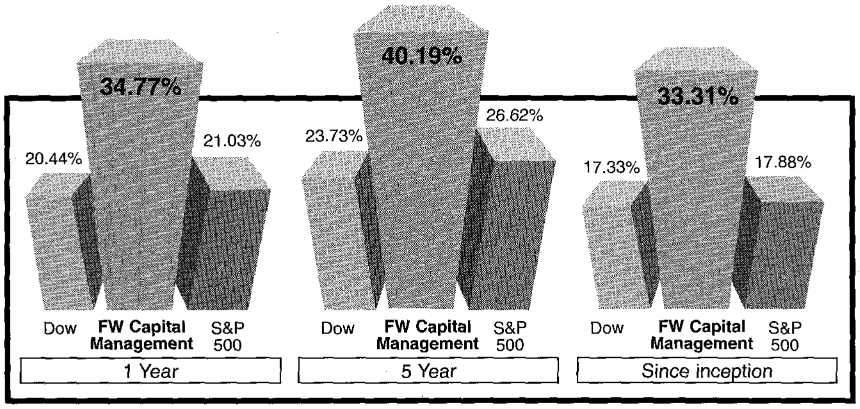

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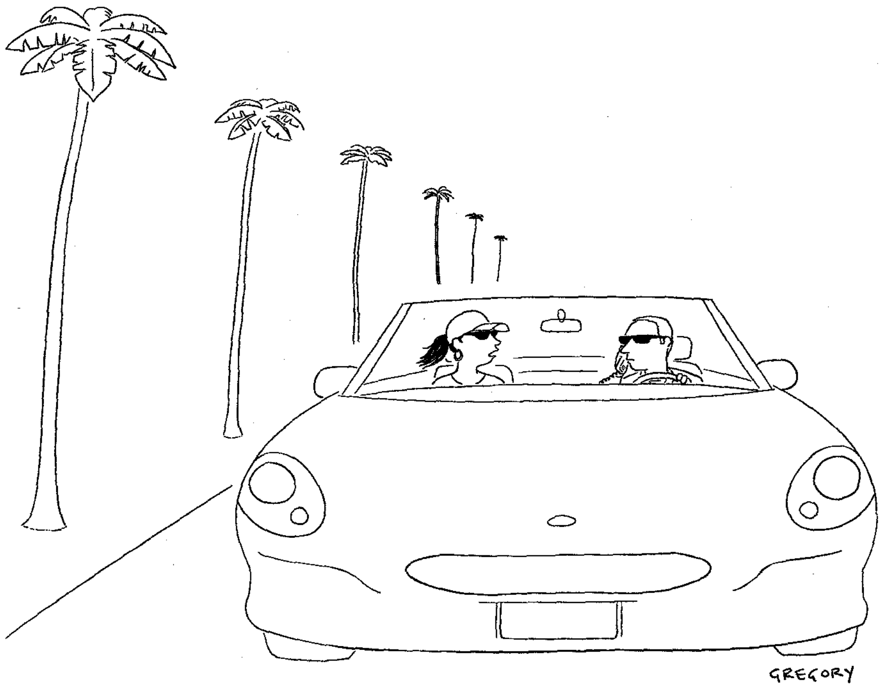
Two, the catalogue branch that Krantz introduced in a sequel, in 1992, are obviously the creations of an experienced shopper. (One imagines that an e-Scruples is in the offing.) Similarly, "I'll Take Manhattan" (1986)—which tells the story of how Maxi Amberville takes *Buttons and Bows*, her publishing-mogul father's rag-trade publication, and relaunches it as a women's magazine called *B&B*—draws on Krantz's experience as a protégée of Herbert Mayes, one of the great women's-magazine editors of the forties and fifties. Conceptually, *B&B* sounds a little like the kind of pipe dream every employee at a glossy has entertained at some point: it's a magazine that celebrates women in all their facial imperfection and excess fat, rather than forcing them to feel that they should be thinner and more clear-skinned. But it actually works, if only because Maxi, thanks to her father, has the clout to force advertisers to go along. Her sales pitch isn't half-bad, either. *B&B*, Maxi explains, is "the reader-friendly magazine, the magazine that loves you and doesn't try to change you, the magazine that wants to amuse you, that exists for your pleasure and *only* your pleasure. FUN. The magazine that doesn't give a shit if you eat too much or can't find a guy, or should have known better or need help. Fun, I say!"

This outburst is one of the rare moments when Krantz's fiction echoes, however faintly, the real-world debate about women's lives. Maxi's concept for *B&B* is Krantz's answer to the feminist critique of women's magazines, though of course it's not identified as such. There would be little point in having Krantz dramatize the women's movement in her novels, because they're feminist enough already—perhaps not in a form that would have been recognizable in the emancipationist utopianism of the seventies, but one that is clearly discernible in the meliorist present. In the jargon of the moment, Krantz's heroines are sex-positive; completely over the victim thing; competitive; aware of the importance of networking; and unwilling to forgo the girlish thrills of dressing up. They don't need gender theorists to teach them that femininity is socially constructed, or Naomi Wolf to show them how to embrace power. Billy and Gigi and Daisy and Maxi and all the other babes with names like hosiery brands understand the hard, hard work that goes into making it as a woman. They don't demand much in return—just to be as rich as possible and to totter around on stiletto heels. A nice man would be good to find, but not indispensable.

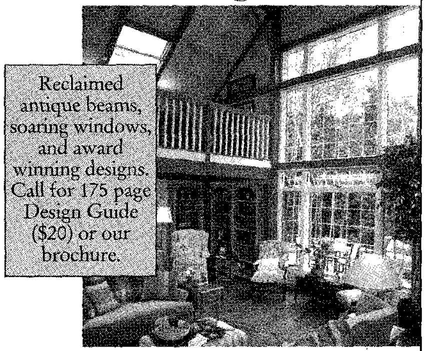
To understand how Krantz became a proto-post-feminist is to face the uncomfortable truth that sexual politics today sounds a lot like it did in the fifties, when Krantz moved in the same social circle as Helen Gurley Brown. (Krantz later contributed to Brown's magazine, *Cosmopolitan.*) Like contemporary mainstream American feminism—which, with its cheerful emphasis on personal ambition, is essentially capitalism with a female face—Krantz's writing is the product of a women's-magazine culture whose chipper advice on seduction, domestic décor, health, and careers hasn't changed much in fifty years. Magazines today may exhibit a heightened degree of sexual and financial explicitness, but their basic premise remains the same: a power-of-positive-thinking outlook and a deep faith in the redemptive possibilities of self-improvement.

The one significant difference between then and now is that there was a lot more short fiction in magazines then, and it tended to be less woozily about self-actualization than about making it as a working girl. The stock heroine of the early- and mid-century women's short story bears a strong resemblance to the Krantz protagonist: she's a plucky, hard-headed lass who knows the worth of a dollar. The best-known commercial novelist of the time, Fannie Hurst, was, like Krantz, criticized for formulaic plots and cookie-cutter characters; she was also one of the highest-paid writers of her day. (In 1944, *Newsweek* wrote, "It happens every two years. There is a burst of advance publicity, booksellers frantically make out orders, there is an expectant hush, and then one day it appears: the new novel by Fannie Hurst. Invariably it sets into motion the same reactions. Book critics moan and try to outdo one another in writing clever, derisive reviews. The public buys it like mad.") A typical Hurst tale (and one that inspired two film adaptations) is the 1933 "Imitation of Life," the story of a woman who, widowed with an infant at eighteen, becomes a syrup-and-waffle tycoon after she puts the face of her black housekeeper on her line of products.

Hurst's heroine is unglamorous by Krantz's standards, but the waffle queen has a more polished friend, Virginia Eden, who was modelled on Hurst's friend Elizabeth Arden, the cosmetics magnate. Many Krantz characters, such as Maggy Lunel, also seem inspired by the real-life beauty-industry figures who



"Last night, I had the weirdest dream sequence."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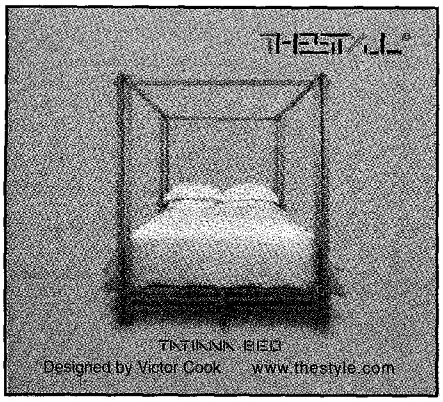

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were the leading female entrepreneurs of their day: Arden, Helena Rubinstein, Estée Lauder. These are women who owed their success to flamboyant personalities, which made for strong brands, and to keen marketing instincts (excluded from conventional distribution networks because they were women, they and their counterparts pioneered such techniques as door-to-door sales and the creation of spa and salon franchises in which to sell their products). "If anyone were ever to ask what my rock-bottom subject matter is," Krantz writes in her memoir, "the answer is 'marketing.' "

Granted, there's an element of fantasy in the ease with which Krantz's executives bequeath their power to other women—Billy passes Scruples on to Gigi, Maggy passes the Lunel Agency to her granddaughter Fauve. In reality, most beauty companies founded by women are either run by their sons or were bought out by large corporations whose chief executive officers are men. There's a measure of fantasy, too, in Krantz's depictions of big-sisterish corporate behavior. Billy, Maggy, and the others are always plucking some young woman from the ranks of the poor and the badly dressed and turning her into a star. How many female executives have the time, or the inclination, to do that today?

Krantz has an even deeper link to the cosmeticians than a shared passion for salesmanship. Just as their products emerged, in some profound, intangible way, from the Jewish immigrant's experience of the makeover—"I was born, I have lived, and I have been made over" is the opening line of Mary Antin's 1912 autobiography "The Promised Land"—so has Krantz's. It isn't an accident that, no matter how highborn her protagonists may be, they come across as "ethnic." Billy Winthrop, the obese daughter of genteelly impoverished Boston Brahmins, is dark-haired and much tormented by her rich Wasp cousins; she grows up, moves to Paris, loses weight, moves to Manhattan, goes to secretarial school, and begins to date Jews—not the caste of quasi-Episcopalian German Jews, who have connections to her oppressive Boston family, but Russian Jews, who are better in bed. Revenge for her miserable childhood comes when she marries Ellis Ikehorn, who may be secretly Jewish, and then, of course, makes a name for her-

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self in retail. Maxi Amberville's father, Zachary, is another non-Wasp Wasp. He starts out as a garmento (*Buttons and Bows* was aimed at the manufacturers of those items), and his aristocratic British wife is appalled at what she sees as her husband's low-class moneygrubbing. Maggy Lunel is Jewish, and the plot of "Mistral's Daughter" turns on the anti-Semitism of her ex-lover, the world-famous painter Julien Mistral.

Krantz writes quite a bit about the burgeoning Jewish American consciousness. Like many well-off Americans of her generation, she spent a formative post-college year in Paris, and her Francophilia lasted nearly a lifetime. In 1982, her sons safely grown and out of the house, she and her husband, the television producer Steve Krantz, moved to Paris for the filming of a miniseries based on "Mistral's Daughter." Three years later, she had suddenly had enough of watching the French pretend that the Americans didn't really liberate them or that they don't still sneer at Jews, and fled back to the United States. You can't help wondering what took her so long, but Krantz often seems slower on the uptake than her own characters. And some things she never satisfactorily explains. Reading the memoir, for instance, you can't quite make out the source of the gratuitous, giddy sluttishness that animates her more appealing heroines. Krantz may have socialized with Helen Gurley Brown's crowd in the fifties, but she herself comes off as a sensible and somewhat boring bourgeoise.

Maybe the trouble is that Krantz isn't really a Krantz character. She tries to turn herself into one in the first chapter of "Sex and Shopping," where she jauntily describes making a journey back to Paris from a skiing trip in the Alps when she was about to turn twenty-one and resolving to lose her virginity to the next Parisian swain she meets. Judy, however, is no Billy, or Daisy, or Maxi, or Maggy, or even—and this may be the point—Mickey Tarcher. Krantz is not self-made or tall or gorgeous or world-historically rich, and she rarely surrenders to interesting, impractical, plot-generating impulses. (She admits that she's not the heroine type; when she shows up in her novels, she says, she's the wisecracking best friend.) But if Judith Krantz the novelist can't quite sell Judith Krantz the ordinary person, she finds pay dirt in Judith Krantz the would-be consultant. In the last third of the memoir she chronicles her efforts to develop her brand name as an author, from the touring it took to get her first book placed on the *Times* best-seller list to the auction held for the paperback rights to her second book, in 1979, which brought more than three million dollars, a record at the time. Here Krantz's self-knowledge is thorough and complete: "With my passion for glamorous marketing, I never forget to whip up so much genuine entertainment through plot and character conflicts that it keeps my imaginary reader, the one I keep in mind as I write, who hates flying and is trapped in a plane circling O'Hare on a foggy night, from thinking of her plight. . . . Ordinary life-size just doesn't do it for me, and I believe it wouldn't do it for her either." Aspiring retailers, take note. ♦

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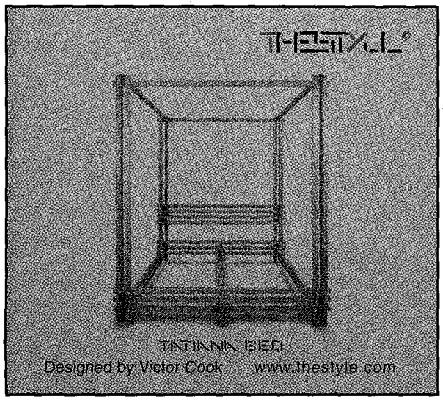

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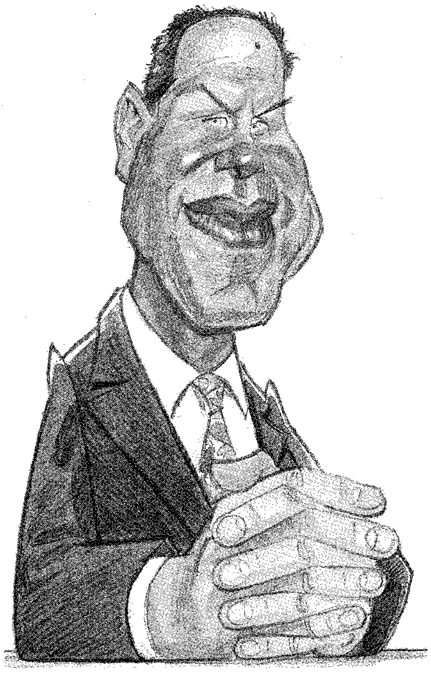
Playing by Michael Eisner's rules.

BY TAD FRIEND

In the summer of 1990, when Don Simpson was getting ready for the première of "Days of Thunder," a movie he had produced for Paramount, he took a moment from his busy schedule of appointments with coke dealers and call girls to send a fax to Jeffrey Katzenberg, the chairman of Disney Studios, which was about to open "Dick Tracy." Simpson warned, "You can't escape the Thunder!" Katzenberg countered, "You won't believe how big my Dick is!" Predictably, both men proved to be overoptimistic. But what's striking about this exchange between Hollywood players, as it is described by Kim Masters in "The Keys to the Kingdom: How Michael Eisner Lost His Grip" (Morrow; $27.50), is its relatively sunny tone. In chronicling a generation of entertainment tycoons, Masters, a writer for *Time* and *Vanity Fair*, reveals just how rare such moments have been. Her book is a group profile of the rise, across a quarter-century, of Eisner, who became the Walt Disney Company's mighty chairman; Katzenberg, who served as Eisner's deputy at Paramount Pictures and then at Disney; Barry Diller, who worked with Eisner at ABC, was his boss at Paramount, and then ran Twentieth Century Fox; and Michael Ovitz, who as the head of the Creative Artists Agency wooed and cudgelled all the others.

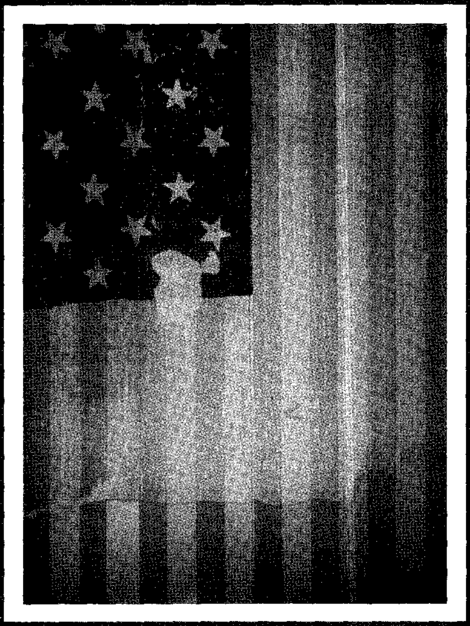
The period in question marked the end of the woolly, director-driven filmmaking of the early seventies and a return to a tightly controlled studio system in which films were mass-released and viewed as "product." Masters holds these men responsible for that change. In particular, she blames them for the triumph of the mindless "high-concept" movie, whose ideas can be explained in a single sentence (steel welder wants to be a ballerina; doctor dad and teen-age son switch bodies). Yet Masters's thorough but frequently unsifted reporting doesn't really bear out these claims. What her book proves, rather, is that Lord Acton was wrong: it's not that people become obnoxious when exposed to absolute power but that only the obnoxious want absolute power badly enough to attain it.

What a merry band the tycoons were. Diller threw pencils at secretaries, Katzenberg wouldn't let his staff leave the office during a bomb scare, and Ovitz told the screenwriter Joe Eszterhas that if he defected to another agency his "foot soldiers" would "blow your brains out." And they're the sympathetic figures in the book. Eisner, for his part, wrote folksy letters to Disney shareholders about his son's Pee Wee hockey games but had a private lexicon that would make David Mamet blanch. When an executive named Donald De Line stood at a company retreat to fret about Disney's cheap, litigious, Big Brother image—the place was widely known as Mouschwitz—



Eisner, Disney's chairman and C.E.O.

DAVID STOTEN



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POLO RALPH LAUREN

Eisner interrupted: "If I can make an extra million dollars by fucking Donald De Line, then fuck Donald De Line."

When Eisner became the chairman of Disney, in 1984, he found his destined niche. Born to wealthy parents on the East Side of Manhattan, he tried his hand at playwriting, but gave it up after college—perhaps wisely: one Eisner work was originally titled "To Metastasize a River"—and became a network programmer. After zooming up the corporate ladder at ABC and then at Paramount, he won the Disney job with an impassioned speech to Sid Bass, a key stockholder, about how "the company should be run from a creative point of view rather than a financial point of view." A memo Eisner had written two years earlier, when he was the president of Paramount, laid out his actual views: "We have no obligation to make history. We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective." And at Disney he did, turning a company worth two billion dollars when he took charge into one worth eighty-five billion today.

Under Eisner, Disney, which hadn't had a live-action hit since "The Love Bug," in 1968, became a major studio. Its formula was to cast fading actors like Bette Midler and Richard Dreyfuss in low-budget films like "Down and Out in Beverly Hills"; Masters calls it "yesterday's stars today." Eisner could also sense tomorrow's stars crowning on the horizon: he knew that Eddie Murphy would explode in "48 Hrs.," and he saw enough promise in the footage of "Terms of Endearment," James Brooks's first film, to carry on with what had become a troubled and vastly expensive shoot. Yet, unlike the Selznicks and Thalbergs of yore, Eisner had no particular love for movies. Masters writes that Eisner didn't know what matte shots were, though he kept referring to them; that he told Richard Lester he wanted a project done in the manner of the Beatles movies without realizing that Lester had directed the Beatles movies; and that he had no understanding of how important it was that Leonard Nimoy play Spock in Paramount's "Star Trek" movie: "Who gives a fuck what this guy with the ears does?" (At Disney, his view on the care and feeding of big-eared characters necessarily changed.)

That kind of challenging remark typified the Hollywood production meetings Masters describes; they were basically scheduled opportunities to be shouted down. The executive suite was a boot camp for suits—suit camp. But winning through manipulation was even more commonplace. We learn that among the leadership techniques Diller used when he was running Paramount was "firing by process," in which he kept unwanted employees out of the loop until they got it and left. Eisner had "the elastic go," in which he would rave about a project while an underling quietly scotched it, and an "optional memory," which enabled him to blame subordinates for his own failed ideas.

Eisner believed that the high salaries Ovitz demanded for clients such as Tom Cruise and Barry Levinson were bad for Disney and for the industry, and he insisted that Katzenberg, his faithful deputy, hold firm, even as he himself went on ski trips with his close friend Ovitz, pumped him for advice, and blamed Katzenberg for the fraught negotiations. Disney succeeded in its determined thrift, and Ovitz and Katzenberg grew to hate each other. Not seeing Eisner's double game, Katzenberg said later, "shows what a naïve schnook I was."

Hardly. Katzenberg was as intense, canny, and bloodless as his boss. After Robin Williams gave voice to the Genie in the 1992 "Aladdin," working for guild minimum, he realized that Disney was making hundreds of millions on the strength of his improvisations. To assuage Williams's feelings, Katzenberg presented him with a Picasso, claiming that it was worth eight million dollars. Not only did the actor find the painting ugly but "Williams's agents" (meaning Ovitz) had reason to believe that Disney had purchased it for less than a million. Williams hasn't worked for Katzenberg since.

Eisner and Katzenberg hated the fact that moviemaking was such a messy, unpredictable business, beset with personnel problems. Alec Baldwin, Bill Murray, and Richard Dreyfuss are all seen here hurling or knocking over ashtrays on Disney sets. So the two executives were delighted when animated films such as "The Little Mermaid" and "Beauty and the Beast" became the company's flagship offerings. It was a happy return to the era of "Snow White"; they could count on daily "pencil mileage" from the animators, and a predictable windfall of product tie-ins. But a funny thing happened on the way to the profit center: Katzenberg began to contribute ideas to the animators and actually to enjoy shielding them from Eisner's budget anxieties.

Then the press began giving credit to Katzenberg for the company's turnaround, and Eisner bridled. He had promised Katzenberg that he would eventually succeed Frank Wells, the president of the company; yet when Wells was killed in a helicopter crash, in 1994, Eisner added the president's title to his own portfolio of honorifics. Katzenberg quit, only to have Eisner deny him his promised share of the studio's profits. In the subsequent "Katz v. Mouse" legal hearings on the matter, Eisner's testimony was a patchwork of evasions, convenient aphasias, and reluctant admissions, such as that he may have said he was the cheerleader and Katzenberg "merely the tip of my pom-pom."

Last year, Disney was forced to settle with Katzenberg, Masters reports, for about two hundred and seventy million dollars. By then, Katzenberg had learned that cash trumps all other ties. When he was starting the studio that became DreamWorks SKG, he persuaded Steven Spielberg to join him with a deftly invidious reference to the venture's other partner, David Geffen: "If you're so successful, how come Geffen has more money than you?"

Meanwhile, Eisner turned to his former boss Barry Diller, and asked him to run Disney's newly acquired ABC network, where they'd begun together. No naïve schnook, Diller declined. At the same time, Eisner set to work on Michael Ovitz, who as a junior agent had cozied up to Eisner at ABC by sending perfume to his secretary and roses to his wife. Ovitz had since become the most feared man in

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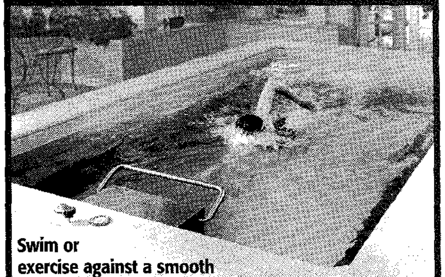

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Hollywood, but even he proved vulnerable to Eisner's promises.

Perhaps the most treacherous incident Masters describes occurred when Ovitz went to visit Eisner in the hospital in 1994, after he had undergone emergency quadruple-bypass surgery but before he broke with Katzenberg. Ovitz confiscated Eisner's cell phone and told him to rest. At one point, though, Ovitz used his own cell phone to discuss a transaction involving programming that would go over the phone lines—an area in which Disney had competing interests. When Ovitz went to the men's room, Eisner phoned Katzenberg and whispered, "You have forty-eight hours to close our telco deals." As "a former Disney executive"—Katzenberg, presumably—told Masters, Eisner, lying in his hospital bed, "couldn't wait for his best friend to take a tinkle so he could screw him."

When Eisner asked Ovitz to be his No. 2 the following year, Ovitz understood that they would be virtual partners, and that he would one day take over the company. But after just fourteen months at Disney, in which he was never given—or never figured out how to take—significant responsibilities, Ovitz quit: he'd been fired by process. Masters concludes, "In retrospect, it would seem to Ovitz that Eisner enjoyed embarrassing him." Despite his heart condition, and huge losses on Euro Disney, and a plateauing corporate balance sheet—and despite the title of Masters's book—Eisner couldn't relinquish his grip on power.

Twenty-five years after Katzenberg, Diller, and Ovitz started out as comrades, they mostly despise one another, and they utterly despise Eisner. There's only room for one at the top. At the book's close, which Masters caps with a knife-like parenthesis, she imagines Eisner serenely surveying the empty landscape, feeling unassailable: "He knew who his friends were. (Who were they?)" ♦

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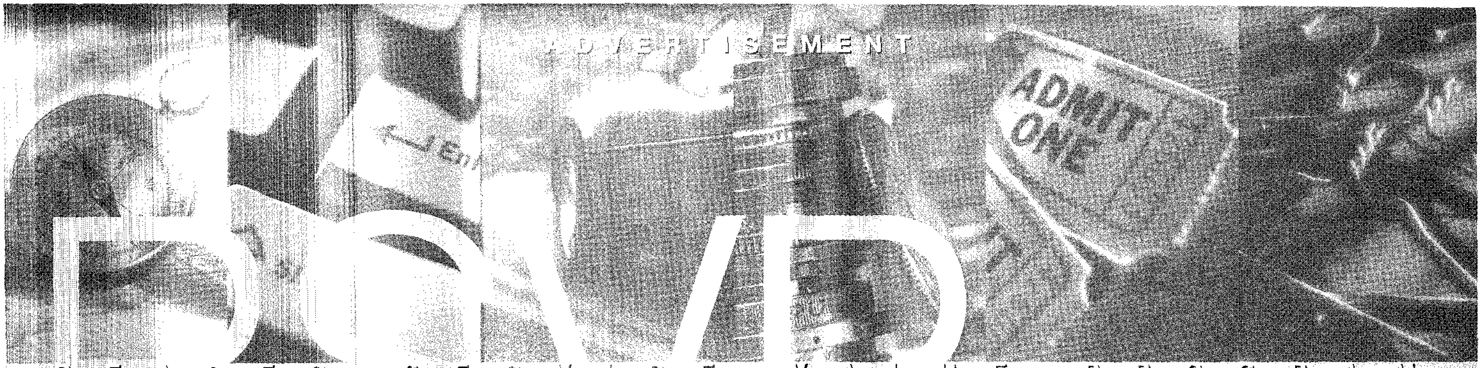

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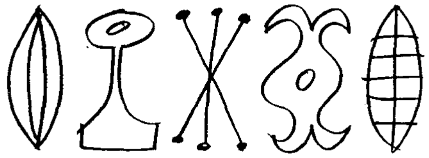
BRIEFLY NOTED

Deliver Us from Evil, *by William Shawcross (Simon & Schuster; $27.50).* The post-Cold War world is rife with bloody-minded tyrants, civil war, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, and this survey of the chief international crises of the nineties—from Baghdad to Kigali, from Sierra Leone to the Balkans, from East Timor to the Western Sahara—makes it clear that the United Nations has responded inadequately and ineptly at almost every turn. And yet, incredibly, Shawcross, a British journalist, comes across as a booster for the U.N. and an apologist for Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He even defends Annan's wretched performance in Rwanda, which has been sharply criticized by an investigation that Annan himself commissioned. Shawcross's reporting here is often secondhand; his prose is dreary; and his thinking (which frequently seeks refuge in anti-Americanism) is lazy. The result is an insult to the gravity of the issues he purports to address, and—worse—to the anguish of the world's politically endangered peoples.

Gold Digger: The Outrageous Life and Times of Peggy Hopkins Joyce, *by Constance Rosenblum (Metropolitan; $26).* A good biography of a bad girl. Between the two world wars, Peggy Hopkins Joyce (the surnames are those of two of her six husbands) was America's best-known courtesan. Though she died, forgotten, in 1957, she survives as Anita Loos's immortal Lorelei Lee, the heroine-narrator of "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes." Joyce was a penniless beauty without talent or training; her appearances onstage and in film served merely as advertisements for her real work, which was extracting wealth, in cash or in kind (houses, automobiles, jewels), from rich men. Rosenblum's account shows a woman who was extravagant, greedy, and promiscuous. She was also naïvely, disarmingly candid—a lovely vamp who invites laughter instead of a scolding.

Horse Heaven, *by Jane Smiley (Knopf; $26).* In Smiley's latest novel, a horse-betting junkie explains to his son that a day at the track is never boring, because everything has a story—"every horse, every jock, every owner, every trainer, every bettor, every race." Certainly, as Smiley shifts her vast stable of invented horses and humans from Santa Anita to Belmont to Pimlico and back again, the reader isn't bored for a minute. Horse-racing, like any obsession, has its arcana: the "unlucky" nun in the parking lot, the vet with a rubber glove up to his shoulder, the progesterone implant "the size and shape of a thick, headless nail." Smiley unceremoniously plunges us into a torrent of character and event, trusting that we will emerge transformed by her exhilarating baptism, and we do. By the novel's finish, the world of horses has become at once radiant in its particularities and as familiar as our own.

God's Favorite, *by Lawrence Wright (Simon & Schuster; $25).* Wright, a reporter for this magazine, tries his hand at fiction with this comic début about the political tangles of nineteen-eighties Panama. At its center is a deliriously weird portrait of General Manuel Antonio Noriega—or, as he is known throughout the novel, Tony. Whether he is in Geneva undergoing treatment for his acne, consoling one of his mistresses with the help of a superintelligent parrot, or making a clumsy but dictatorial pass at a male pilot mid-flight, Noriega is both crazed and oddly sympathetic, a kind of Central American Tony Soprano. Cameos by such international luminaries as Pablo Escobar, Fidel Castro, and Oliver North serve as reminders of the real-world consequences of this absurdist circus, which is equal parts banana republic and banana peel.



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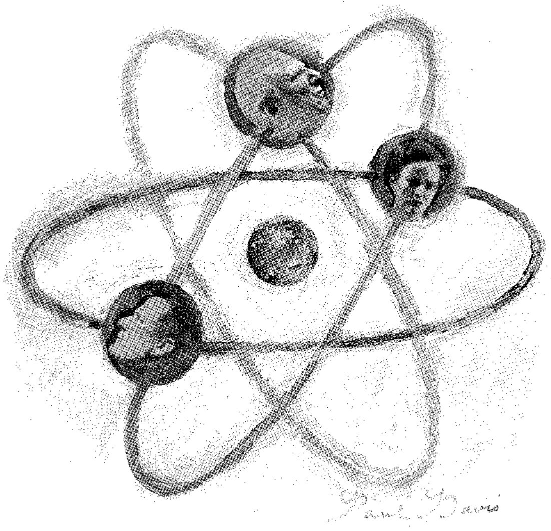
Michael Frayn and George C. Wolfe explode on Broadway.

BY JOHN LAHR

It's springtime on Broadway; on street corners the hustlers are popping up, as cocky as daffodils, to play three-card monte, a dexterous game of now-you-see-it-now-you-don't. Over at the Royale Theatre, in a show that speculates on the controversial 1941 reunion of the two giants of quantum mechanics, the physicists Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, the playwright Michael Frayn is working a similar startling sleight of hand on a spellbound crowd. In "Copenhagen," the game of not knowing is elevated to an organizing principle, which is both the subject and the object of the theatrical exercise.



The actors in "Copenhagen" collide, separate, realign themselves like so many protons.

PAUL DAVIS

Dubbed the "white Jew of science" by the Nazis, Heisenberg was the youngest full professor in Germany; he remained there throughout the war and claimed to have taken no part in developing a bomb. Did Heisenberg visit his former mentor, the Danish, half-Jewish Bohr, to lure him over to the German side? To make a pact not to help either the Allies or the Nazis build a bomb? To flaunt the power of Germany's apparent victory over Denmark? To save Bohr? All these scenarios are played out by a trio of Broadway pros: Philip Bosco as the avuncular Bohr; Blair Brown as his brusque wife, Margrethe; and Michael Cumpsty as the whiz kid Heisenberg.

"How difficult it is to see even what's in front of one's eyes," Heisenberg says at one point. "All we possess is the present, and the present endlessly dissolves into the past." And so it does. With his characters shuttling between time zones as they speak, Frayn, who studied philosophy at Cambridge, replays the meeting from a variety of perspectives in order to demonstrate the difficulty of making any statement that holds true both for the behavior of the physical world and for the behavior of humans. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and Bohr's notion of "complementarity" are superbly dramatized. "I'm a particle; I'm also a wave," Heisenberg says at one point, trying to explain the multiplicity of obligations that informed his decision to visit Bohr. He goes on, "We have one set of obligations to the world in general, and we have other sets, never to be reconciled, to our fellow-countrymen, to our neighbors, to our friends, to our family, to our children. . . . All we can do is to look afterwards, and see what happened." This gesture of retrospective selection is both the literal and the figurative activity of the play. But the intellectual implication of the play's conceit—"Everything *is* personal," as Margrethe succinctly puts it—is hardly news. What does Pinter dramatize? Or Beckett? Or Stoppard? Or, indeed, even Feydeau? In the form and content of their stories, each of these playwrights turns the notion of causality on its head, showing us what Heisenberg merely tells us: "There is no precisely determinable objective universe. . . . The universe exists only as a series of approximations." The mind wants order; and in its desire to manufacture it mankind makes either art or fiasco.

Among his many literary gifts, Frayn is a farceur. He has an elegant, almost algebraic way with the structure of a play, which can develop into an equation of hilarity ("Noises Off"), or, as in "Copenhagen," into an equation of insight. In fact, this play is so meticulous, so admirable, and so grave that you defensively want to tousle its well-kempt appearance and tell it to lighten up. In Frayn's hands, the Broadway-show shop is turned into a talking shop, and more's the pity. He had originally imagined "Copenhagen" as a radio play, and if you shut your eyes, all of the play's meaning is clear. Nevertheless, the director, Michael Blakemore, manages to make dynamic and suggestive an evening that consists of three actors and three chairs. According to Heisenberg, the very act of observation changes the thing observed; Peter J. Davison's shrewd set—a kind of blond-plywood bullring built within the proscenium, where some of the audience are seated so that we can look at them looking down on the proceedings as they look out at us—emphasizes that act. The play itself takes place within the bullring's steeply raked center, a circle bisected by a triangle: it evokes the image of both the universe and a molecule emitting light. With Blakemore's deft orchestration, the actors collide, separate, realign themselves like so many neutrons and protons as the onlookers peer down from their perches, trying to make sense of it all. The conundrum of uncertainty is everywhere: the physicists modify the thing observed; their conversation is in turn modified by what they call "the unseen audience," the Nazis who have bugged Bohr's Copenhagen home; we, of course,

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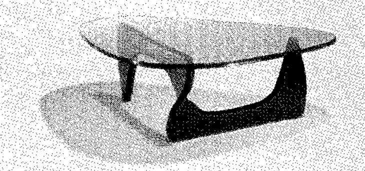

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are modified by being observed and by observing them trying to observe one another. It's a kind of Montana shift of the mind.

From year to year, Broadway rarely sees an idea; now, suddenly, it has to contend with the Encyclopædia Britannica. The prospect is as improbable and wonderful as watching a beggar win the lottery. "Copenhagen" offers a particular kind of brain-teasing pleasure, not unlike solving a fiendish crossword puzzle. Still, whether it's the strange bounce of the words off the plywood floor or the inevitable difficulty of American actors getting their mouths around great chunks of literate English, all three performances convey the thrill of intellectual discovery and disagreement but lack a certain crispness. The play, which has been a triumph in London, will no doubt be judged a triumph in New York, but what it really represents is a triumph of the reading room over the fairground. (Frayn's play is published with a forty-one-page postscript of his sources, including an outline sketch of the beginnings of modern atomic theory.) In this sense, "Copenhagen" 's victory is a Pyrrhic one. Theatre, after all, is a game of show and tell, not tell and tell.

Unlike the characters in "Copenhagen," the people who populate George C. Wolfe's version of "The Wild Party" (at the Virginia Theatre) are out of their heads, not stuck in them. Based on Joseph Moncure March's blunt, sour, vicious little poem about an orgy thrown by a lubricious vaudeville hoofer called Queenie, and Burrs, the brutal comedian with whom she lives, the show wears its decadence and its sense of soiled collapse like a badge. In the insistent staccato rhythm of March's poem, the twenties' romance of freedom is replayed as a romance of disintegration. It takes twice as long to see the two-hour show as it does to read the poem, and that bloating of the characters' desperation seems to be the show's problem: beneath the semaphore of its noisy panache, it is lost, at once waving *and* drowning. The enormous energy that comes across the footlights feels more like theatrical hyperventilation than revelation.

Wolfe is probably our greatest showman. In the past, his masterful productions have been improvisations with genius: Zora Neal Hurston ("Spunk"), Jelly Roll Morton and Gregory Hines ("Jelly's Last Jam"), Savion Glover ("Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk"), and Tony Kushner ("Angels in America"). In "The Wild Party," unfortunately, his gifts of presentation are combined with a minor poem and a mediocre composer who can't properly contest Wolfe's high-octane imagination. Michael John LaChiusa's thirty-song score has not one memorable melody; it could shed five songs and still have the same impact, or lack of it. On the other hand, his collaboration with Wolfe has produced lyrics that are more direct, supple, and fun than usual, especially in the songs "Moving Uptown," "Best Friend," and "When It Ends," an eleven-o'clock number sung by Eartha Kitt, which stops the show. "I can tell you that no party lasts forever / I been there and there and there and seen enough," La Kitt purrs. "And you better hope to Jesus or Mohammed / Or whatever / That you got the right stuff / When it ends."

In the unrelenting drive of Wolfe's production, there's no time to get to know the characters. Still, by force of personality, a great deal of talent shines through. Toni Collette is superb as the "sexually ambitious" Queenie, greedy for any sensation to fill her emptiness, at once powerful and pained. The musical doesn't properly establish her sadomasochistic relationship with Burrs, but nonetheless Mandy Patinkin manages to shiver your timbers with his brutish mockery. The show uses Ms. Kitt sparingly but well; amid the tumult, her stillness and command stand out.

Although the poem ends bleakly, the show stage-manages some commercial uplift: after Burr has been murdered and the party is well and truly over, Wolfe allows Queenie to wipe off her mask of makeup. It's meant as a moment of epiphany, but it's unearned and silly—a dollop of boulevard hope after a heavy dose of boulevard nihilism. Broadway, it seems, is the only place where you can have your orgy and your redemption at the same time. In "The Wild Party," Wolfe has given us a juiced-up sense of a winded civilization that seems momentarily to have claimed him. Here, sad to report, he's staging but not thinking. ♦

ERIC PALMA

THE CURRENT CINEMA

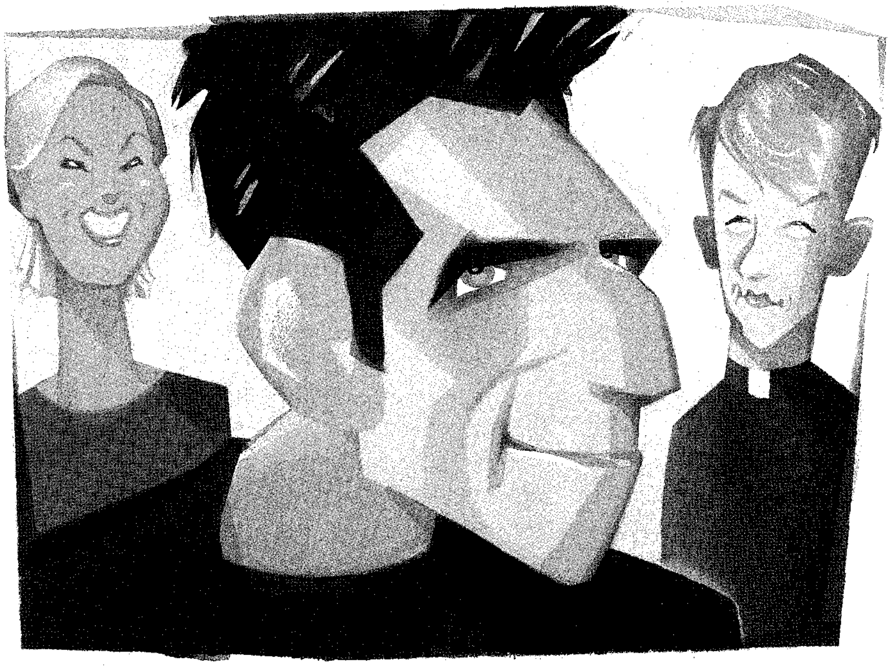
DEVOTED

God and a girl, and an Anglo-Asian dilemma.

BY DAVID DENBY

In "Keeping the Faith," two thirteen-year-old New York boys, Jake and Brian, take up with a girl at their school, Anna, a flirtatious and fearless blonde who leaps around the streets and playgrounds like a beautiful untamed animal. Both boys are mesmerized by her, and she becomes their leader and champion. But her family leaves for California, and nearly twenty years go by. Then one day Anna (Jenna Elfman), now a shiny, big-deal corporate consultant, steps off an airplane from the Coast. She's nervy and direct, as quick as ever, and the two boys—they are men but still very boyish—fall in love with her all over again. There are, however, a few problems. Brian (Edward Norton) is now a priest, with a largely Hispanic congregation on the Upper West Side, and he takes his vow of celibacy seriously. And Jake (Ben Stiller) is a dynamic young rabbi who is besieged by the women in *his* Upper West Side congregation—or, rather, by the mothers, who come after him bearing lusciously beautiful daughters. He's expected to marry, and marry Jewish, and Anna doesn't qualify.

Edward Norton is an intense young actor, and in this, his initial effort as a director, one would expect him to turn out a racking Dostoyevskian melodrama, not a commercial comedy about two guys and a girl. The movie may be the latest offspring of the 1962 Truffaut classic "Jules and Jim," in which two buddies basked in the reflected glory of Jeanne Moreau, but it has still louder echoes of Old Hollywood. The plot is movieish, obvious, a bit of a gimmick (a priest *and* a rabbi?). But it's gimmicky only in outline. Scene by scene, "Keeping the Faith" plays well, sometimes extremely well, with lots of goofy and charming detail. (The trailer, by the way, doesn't suggest the movie's quality.) I was impressed by Norton's acumen as an entertainer and a storyteller: "Keeping the



Jenna Elfman, Ben Stiller, and Edward Norton in "Keeping the Faith," Norton's directorial début, in which a priest and a rabbi are the romantic heroes.

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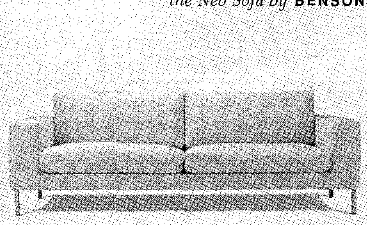

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Faith" skirts about a dozen potential traps and embarrassments and grows in emotional force, and by the end I had to brush away a tear or two. The screenplay, which was written by Stuart Blumberg, a college buddy of Norton's, doesn't have the usual abrupt and jangled sound of Hollywood comedies—the movies in which six different writers throw jokes into the pot and not even God himself can blend them into an edible dish. This picture has a unified conception. There's a wonderful framing device: Norton's priest gets sloshed and relates the entire tale to a sympathetic bartender (Brian George), a refined Indian gentleman who puts his elbows on the bar, his face in his hands, and asks appropriately skeptical questions. His disbelief reminds us that the movie is a romantic fable, that we shouldn't take it too literally.

How can you make a priest and a rabbi romantic heroes? Norton and Blumberg insist strenuously that, under the cloth, the two clerics are regular guys. There they are bopping along New York streets, wearing shades and leather jackets, digging the city, bantering with each other. Their friendship is based on a history of hanging out, with all its shared jokes—and on shared seriousness, too. Each of them has a calling, a gift, and if "Keeping the Faith" hadn't firmly established that right at the beginning it would have been a ludicrous fake. Jake's gift, I have to admit, made me a little uneasy. Jake is a mover, a live wire who wants everyone in his Reform congregation to *feel* religion, and he comes at them like a bullying standup comic. Small and intense, Stiller has deep-set dark eyes and a slightly rabbity, hungry manner. (His motto in all his roles might be "I *want*.") His Jake, I think, is meant to be honest but a little overwrought; Norton and Stiller may not realize how much of a narcissist he is. Dealing with his congregation, he's like Whoopi Goldberg doing the Oscars—everything that happens at the synagogue is about *him*. Will he be accepted by the congregation or not? He's egotistical, but a core of earnestness saves him. By contrast, Norton, with his gravelly voice and his sheepish smile, has a stillness, a gentleness in his manner that is very touching. In such films as "American History X" and "Rounders," Norton has played snarling, psychopathic characters, but he's utterly believable as a hip young priest.

Jake hooks up with Anna, who operates at the same frantic tempo that he does. A good businesswoman, she cuts to the heart of things and moves on; the film is devoted, in part, to her realization that moving on all the time is not the way to live. Jenna Elfman, from the sitcom "Dharma and Greg," has the on-the-button timing of a practiced TV actress, but she has something else, too—a glow, a readiness. At a certain point, she leans her long body into Stiller as he's standing against a wall, and every man in the audience must have thought, Wow! Elfman races skillfully through her corporate-operator jargon, turning it into stylized patter, but as her character develops discontents and desires she seems not just bright but extraordinarily intelligent and emotionally potent. (Jean Arthur may have a successor after all.) Blumberg's writing and Norton's direction help her a lot: A big fight with Stiller is perfectly written, timed, and delivered, and it leaves one a little heartsick. But only a little. Norton keeps the tone light, bittersweet—after all, this is only a nutty romantic story related by a drunken priest to a bartender. As Jake and Anna jump into their affair, they keep Brian out of it, telling him nothing. But Brian—despite his vows, his seriousness, his sense of sacrifice—is also susceptible to Anna's power. The scene in which he confesses his love for her, played without the ghost of a smirk, is both painful and funny.

Norton has a feeling for physical comedy, and he throws in single-joke vignettes that have a flip, easy rhythm.

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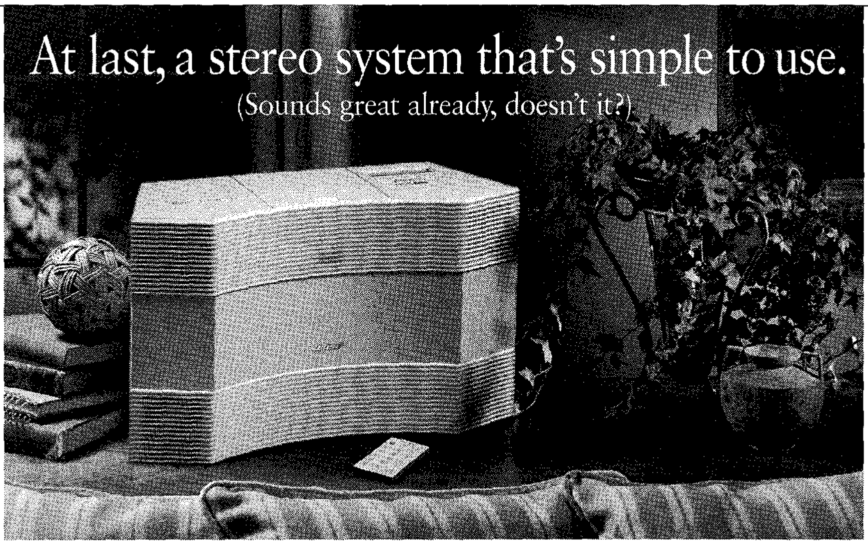
The teen-aged Brian makes the sign of the Cross on himself, and we see it drawn over his body onscreen like a football play diagrammed on television. But when Jake tries to imitate him, he can't, or won't, get it right, and the diagram comes out as a diamond, and then as a Jewish star. There's also a good running joke about a photographic series called Heroes of the Torah—Jews in dark hats and beards who are depicted on trading cards, like basketball players. Most of "Keeping the Faith" is fresh as rain—it's a great spring movie, and a great date movie, too. Norton, it turns out, has an appreciation of the romantic landscapes and moods of Manhattan comparable to Woody Allen's. (It's a high tribute to the city that Anna comes to the center of corporate ambition and winds up finding her inner self amid the towers. New York as a vale of soulmaking?) At the same time, Norton and Blumberg have a looser, more accommodating sense of the city's pleasures than Allen; they're not shamed, as he is, by ethnicity. All in all, this is a considerable directorial début. Norton may make that Dostoyevskian drama someday, but if he wants to stick with romantic comedy, that's good enough for me.

The great Indian actor Om Puri (of "My Son the Fanatic") almost makes "East Is East" worth seeing. He plays George Khan, Pakistani patriarch and tyrant, husband of the stoical Englishwoman Ella (Linda Bassett), and father of seven children. An émigré who has settled in Manchester, George tries to impose traditional Islamic ways on his kids, most of whom are escaping into English popular culture as rapidly as they can. Puri has a big, handsome-ugly face, and he wears a mustache that gives George a necessary touch of vanity. "East Is East" was originally a successful play by Ayub Khan-Din, who has worked out a profane argot for George, in which the word "bloody" is heard at least four times in every sentence, and I enjoyed Puri's devastating ease with the lingo and the salty Brit sound of the family members ragging one another across the living room. But "East Is East" is repetitive and tiresome: George, who longs for respect in the Muslim community, refuses to understand that his kids simply don't care about what he cares about. He brutalizes his wife and children over and over; he's fairly stupid, often hateful, and not ambiguous enough to be a tragic or even deeply interesting figure. "East Is East" is family melodrama, not drama, and almost embarrassingly revealing of its stage origins. There must be five scenes in which the children are doing something forbidden, only to scatter as George comes into the house. There's some dim joking about a "late" circumcision that I could have done without and a curtain line regarding a cup of tea that generations of bad plays have brewed into inanity. See it if you want a powerful dose of Puri, but you'd be better off renting "My Son the Fanatic," a much finer movie. ♦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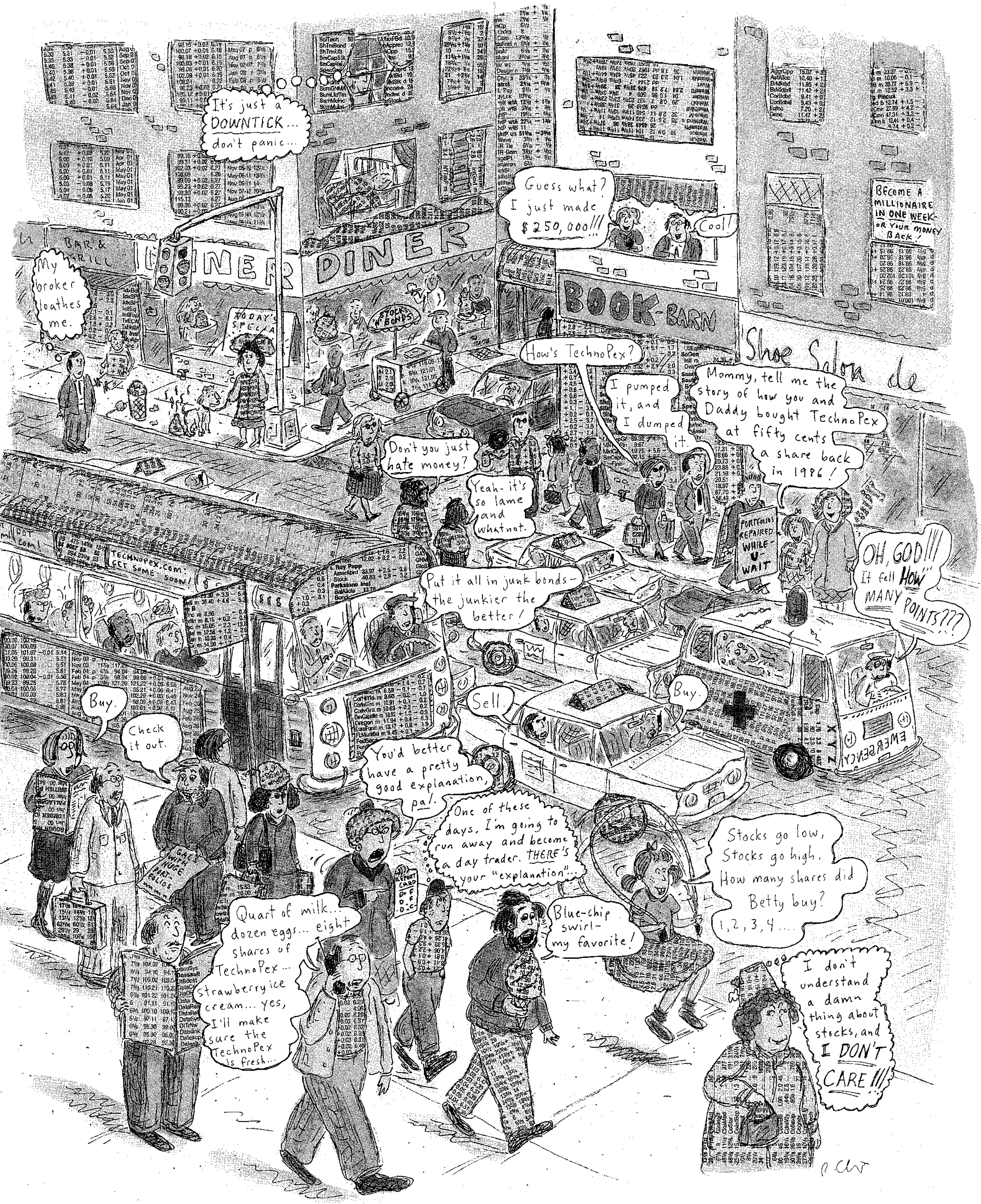
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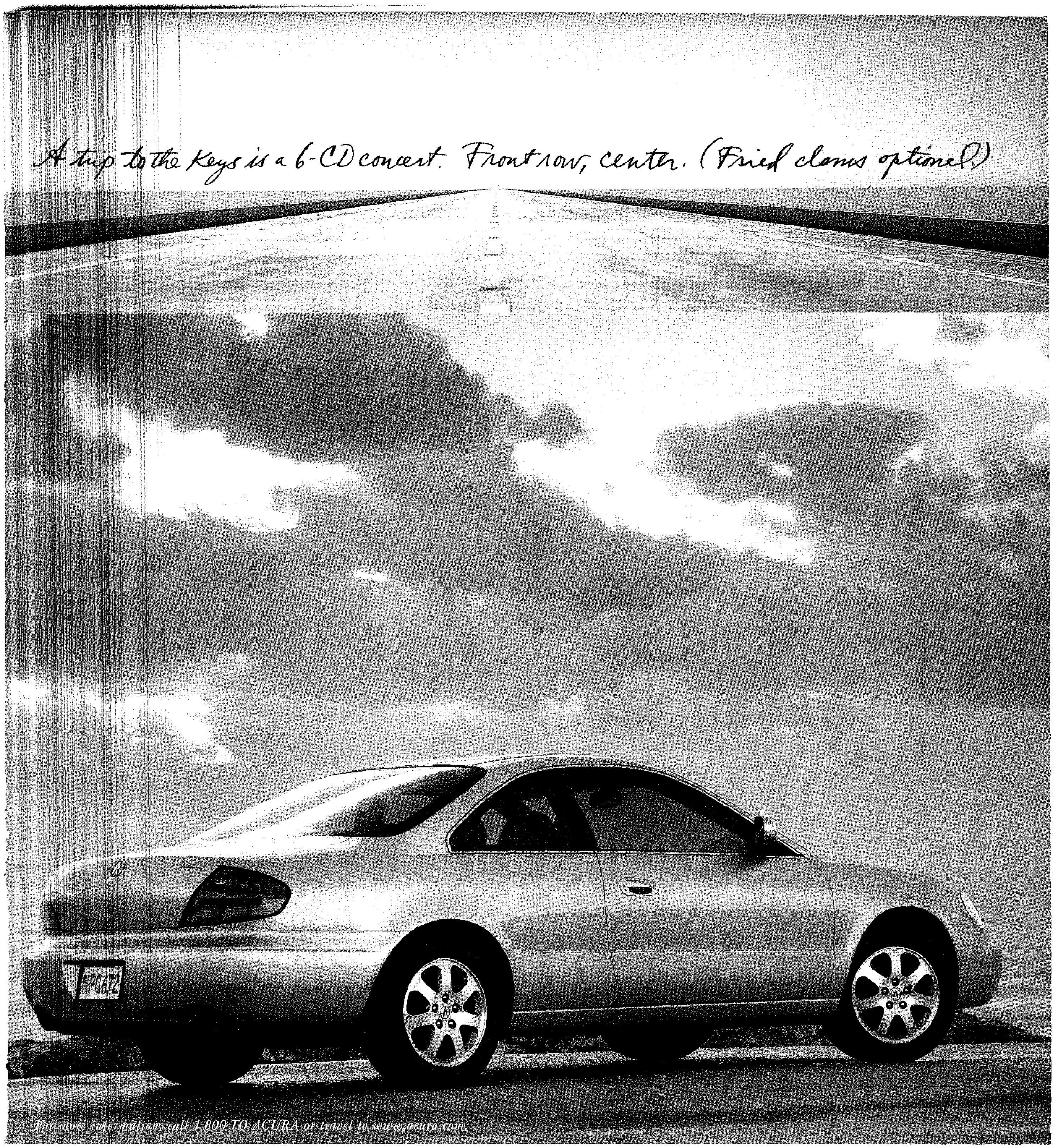
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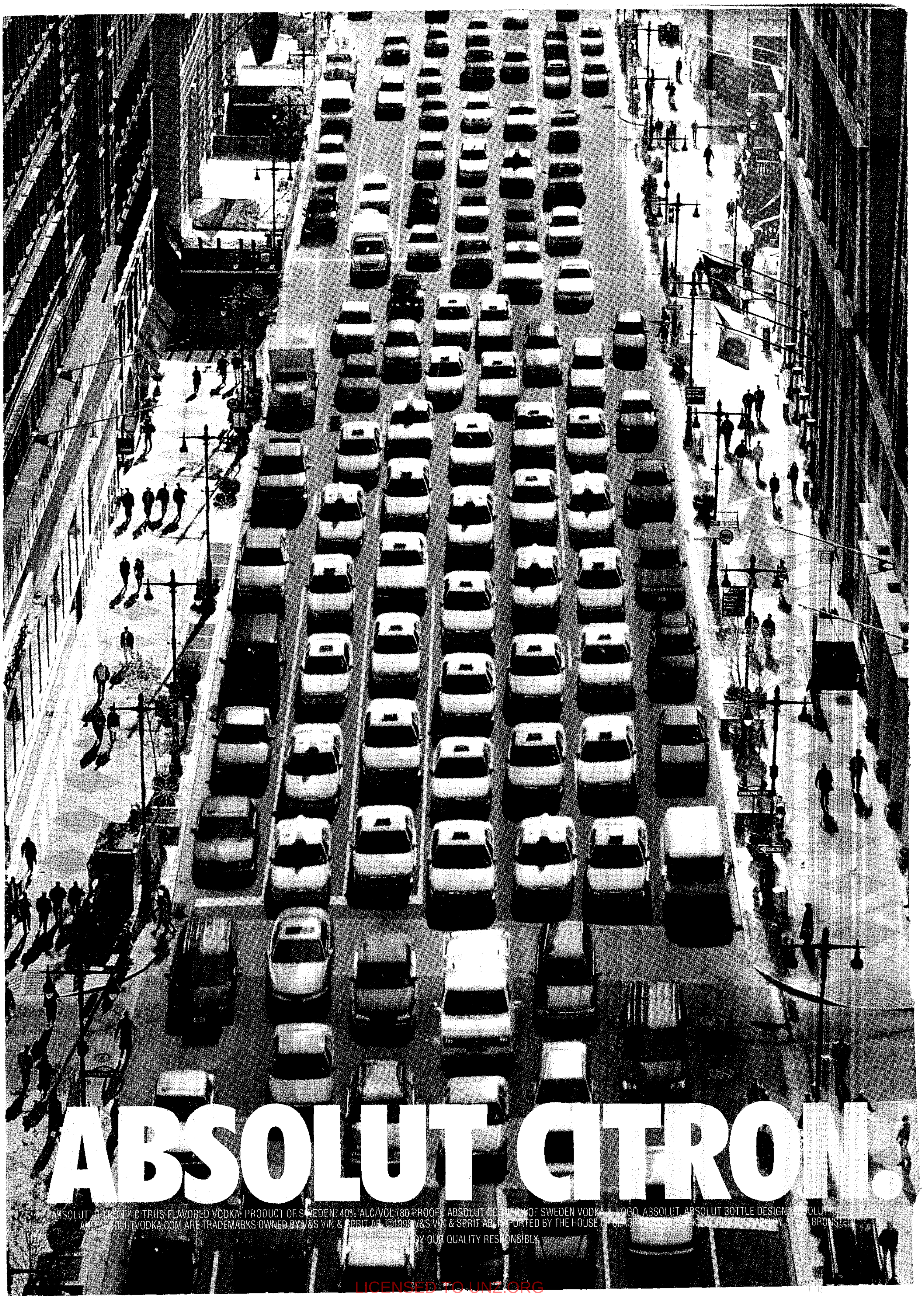

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